

Lady & Bird Films

Presents

SUBJECT

Directed by Jennifer Tiexiera & Camilla Hall

Feature Documentary | 93 mins | USA

WORLD PREMIERE: Tribeca Film Festival 2022

Camden International Film Festival 2022

AFI Fest 2022

Big Sky Documentary Film Festival 2023

CPH:DOX 2023

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Arthur Agee, participant of Hoop Dreams; photo by Zachary Shields

SYNOPSIS

LOGLINE

Subject explores the life-altering experience of sharing one's life on screen through the participants of five acclaimed documentaries.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

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SYNOPSIS

Subject explores the life-altering experience of sharing one's life on screen through key participants of acclaimed documentaries *The Staircase*, *Hoop Dreams*, *The Wolfpack*, *Capturing the Friedmans*, and *The Square*. These erstwhile documentary "stars" reveal the highs and lows of their experiences as well as the everyday realities of having their lives put under a microscope. Also featuring commentary from such influential names in the doc world as Kirsten Johnson, Sam Pollard, Thom Powers and Sonya Childress, the film unpacks vital issues around the ethics and responsibility inherent in documentary filmmaking. As tens of millions of people consume documentaries in an unprecedented "golden era," *Subject* urges audiences to consider the often profound impact on their participants.



Margie Ratliff, participant of The Staircase; photo by Adriel Gonzalez

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

As filmmakers, we have both seen the participants of our past films struggle through some of the darkest moments in their lives, and we have found ourselves often challenged and conflicted as to how best we can support them. The idea for Subject was born when we found ourselves asking the question: is our drive to tell stories overriding our ability to put those we are filming first? We realized a critical need for a better understanding of what it is like to be on the other side of the lens. To feel like you are not in control of your narrative, or to see others achieve fame, profit, or otherwise benefit from your story?

Since we began shooting in 2018, we've watched our industry transform as documentary storytelling has become increasingly motivated by money and awards. When asked the question: "are we in a golden age of documentary filmmaking?," interviewee Thom Powers quickly maintained that we are now in the "corporate age" of documentary. With the rise of global streaming platforms and audiences drawn to a more "docu-tainment" style of storytelling, we have seen the industry pushing the ethical limits of the genre's traditional "observational" mission. Interviewee Sonya Childress said it best: "As long as it's sexy, as long as it feels ripped from the headlines, as long as you can turn it around quick... you will be rewarded for it."

We came together to make this film to identify what we can do better individually as filmmakers using a "nothing about us, without us" approach. Who better to help guide these conversations than the people who have spent decades on the other end of the camera? Our hope is that Subject can help inspire a larger industry wide conversation when it comes to some of these ethical challenges and shed light on the participant/filmmaker relationship for documentary audiences.



Mukunda Angulo, participant of *The Wolfpack*; photo by Zachary Shields

FILMMAKER BIOS

Jennifer Tiexiera (Co-Director/Producer) and **Camilla Hall** (Co-Director/Producer) met at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2017 with the premieres of their films *A Suitable Girl* (Tiexiera) and *Copwatch* (Hall). They deeply connected over their filmmaking experiences and their feelings about the industry and decided to co-direct *Subject*. They formed Lady & Bird in 2021 alongside Rita Baghdadi.



Jennifer Tiexiera is an award-winning documentary director, producer and editor. Most recently, she directed *P.S. Burn This Letter Please*, a film that begins with the discovery of a box of letters that date back to the early 1950's and reveal an untold and secret history of New York's LGBT community. *P.S. Burn This Letter Please* made its debut at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival and won the Audience Award for Documentary Feature at the 2020 Outfest Film Festival. In 2019 Jennifer completed *17 Blocks*, a documentary directed by Davy Rothbart and spanning over 20 years as it intimately follows the lives of a Washington, DC family deeply affected by gun violence. *17 Blocks* premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival where Jennifer was awarded Best Editing in a Documentary Feature Film. In 2017, she both produced and edited the documentaries *A Suitable Girl*, winner of the Albert Maysles Award at Tribeca, and *Waiting for Hassana*, an official selection of the Sundance, SXSW and Toronto film festivals. Jennifer's previous work also includes the documentary *Salam*

Neighbor, the narrative film *Road to Paloma* and the 2011 SXSW Documentary Grand Jury Prize winner *Dragonslayer*. Some of her television credits include the documentaries *Oprah Builds a Network* and *Biggie: The Notorious Life of B.I.G.*, the Emmy-nominated ESPN film *The Marinovich Project*, and the short film *Woinshet*, directed by Marisa Tomei and Lisa Leone for PBS. Jennifer is a proud member of Brown Girls Doc Mafia, the Documentary Producers Alliance, the International Documentary Association, LatinX Directors, Women in Film, and Film Fatales. She is currently in production directing her first series for Jigsaw/HBO.



Subject is **Camilla Hall's** third independent documentary feature film. She recently completed directing *Kingdom of Dreams*, a new documentary series about the golden age of luxury fashion produced by Emmy-award winning Misfits Entertainment, the filmmakers behind *McQueen* and *Rising Phoenix*, for Sky and HBO Max. Her first documentary feature, *Copwatch*, a film about police brutality, premiered in Competition at the 2017 Tribeca Festival and sold to Amazon and her second, *Garenne*, an investigation into a child sexual abuse scandal on a tax-haven island, was broadcast across Europe by BBC Storyville, Arte, NRK, SVT, and DRK. Camilla has also produced films including *Sirens* (Sundance 2022) and *Circus of Books* (Tribeca, 2021 and Netflix). She is an executive producer on *Black Barbie: A Documentary*, directed by Lagueria Davis, and will serve as an executive producer on Rita Baghdadi's next film. She taught the inaugural documentary filmmaking class at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. Prior to filmmaking, Camilla was an

award-winning journalist at the Financial Times covering Wall Street in New York, and spent five years covering the Middle East prior to that. She now works on films between London and Los Angeles.

Lauren Saffa - Editor

Lauren Saffa is an Emmy Award-winning film editor specializing in documentaries. *I Am Skateboarder*, a new doc she cut about legendary trans skateboarder Leo Baker, will premiere on Netflix later in 2022. Recent editing highlights include *The Cost of Silence*, a whistleblowing film about the Deepwater Horizon disaster victims (Sundance 2020) and the ESPN 30 for 30 short *Blackfeet Boxing* about a Native American boxing gym for girls (Sports Emmy - Outstanding Short Sports Documentary, 2021). Her TV credits include the new hit Netflix documentary series *Song Exploder*, and *Watch the Sound With Mark Ronson* for Apple TV+. Other documentary work includes *Do You Trust This Computer* about the future of Artificial Intelligence, *The Beatles: Eight Days a Week - The Touring Years* (Dir. Ron Howard), and *Hooligan Sparrow* (Dir. Nanfu Wang), a guerrilla-style film about human rights activism in China (Oscar Shortlist Best Documentary, Sundance 2016).

Zachary Shields - Director of Photography

Zachary Shields is a cinematographer whose projects include the Sundance Grand Jury Award-winning documentary *The Price of Free*, which documents the efforts of Nobel Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi in his quest to end child slavery; HBO's *McMillions*, chronicling the McDonald's monopoly scandal; and a 6-part documentary series for STARZ entitled *Warriors of Liberty City*. Zachary also filmed *17 Blocks*, a multigenerational story of one family living in the shadow of the US Capital, *PS Burn This Letter Please*

and *XY Chelsea*, all of which had their premieres at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2019 and 2021. Previously, he shot and produced *Night School*, which premiered at Tribeca in 2016 and offers an intimate look at a year in the lives of three adult students attempting to go back and get their high school diplomas.

Jonathan Kirkscey - Composer

Jonathan Kirkscey is a composer, producer, cellist, and guitarist. As a film composer, he scored Morgan Neville's documentaries *Won't You Be My Neighbor* and *Best of Enemies*, the latter earning him the International Documentary Association's award for Best Original Music. Jonathan also composed music for several Netflix Original documentary series including *Chelsea Does* and *Abstract: The Art of Design*. His other feature scores include Mike McCarthy's *Cigarette Girl*, the documentary *2 Million Minutes: The 21st Century Solution*, Craig Brewer's debut feature *The Poor and Hungry*, and *Only Child* from director Brian Pera. Jonathan has composed music for both narrative and documentary shorts including *A Fighting Chance* from Morgan Neville, *A Tangible Birthplace* and *The Fatted Calf* from The Soundtrack Project which aired on PBS, and *Bookin'*. He has also provided arrangements and original pieces for the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. As an arranger and performer he has worked with Cat Power, Al Green, Ra Ra Riot, Smokey Robinson, Johnny Mathis, Steve Jordan, Daniel Johnston, Jay Reatard, North Mississippi Allstars, Lucero, and many others. He can be heard playing cello on film soundtracks for *The Poor and Hungry*, *Black Snake Moan* and *My Blueberry Nights*.

Rafaël Leloup - Composer

Born in Belgium, Rafaël Leloup graduated from the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles in classical composition and also studied composition at the Conservatorio di Musica di Bologna (Italy), accordion at the Conservatoire Royal de Mons (Belgium), and film scoring at New York University. He received honors for his work from Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, Los Angeles Film Music Foundation, Wurlitzer Foundation, ASCAP, and NYU, among others. He has worked on a number of independent films including *The Other Lamb* by Malgorzata Szumowska (jury prize at Berlinale 2016 and Venice's Mostra 2018), as well as Lionsgate's *Consumed* for the *Twilight Saga: But Not For Me*, winner of Best Original Score award at the Brooklyn Film Festival; *Tristan*, shortlisted for the BAFTA Student Film Awards; and *Lily In The Grinder*, finalist of HBO's Project Greenlight. Some of his projects and collaborations have screened at MoMA, Berlinale, SXSW, BFI London, the Toronto International Film Festival, and the Tribeca Film Festival. Rafaël was nominated for Best Young European Composer at the World Soundtrack Awards in 2013.

Dr Kameelah Mu'Min Rashad - Executive Producer / Participant Advocate

Dr. Kameelah Mu'Min Rashad is the primary care coordinator and participant advocate on *Subject*. In this role, Dr. Mu'Min Rashad acts as a psychological consult, participant advocate and subject matter expert on trauma, healing and ethical engagement with crew and film participants specifically; she creates and advises on individual and collective self-care plan through all phases of production, including post-screening emotional support and care. She has served as a consultant to documentary filmmakers on matters related to participant care, ethics, consent, and healing centered filmmaking. Films have included the Oscar-nominated *Attica* (Stanley Nelson and Traci A Curry), *Hazing* (Byron Hurt) and *The Feeling of Being Watched* (Assia Boundaoui). Dr. Mu'Min Rashad is a member of the Documentary Accountability Working Group (DAWG) and Color Congress, a national collective of majority people of color (POC) and POC-led organizations aimed at centering and strengthening nonfiction storytelling. Dr. Mu'Min Rashad is the founding President of Muslim Wellness Foundation, a

nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting healing and emotional well-being in the American Muslim community. Through Muslim Wellness Foundation, Dr. Mu'Min Rashad has established the Omar ibn Said Institute for Black Muslim Studies & Research, the annual Black Muslim Psychology Conference and the Deeply Rooted Emerging Leaders Fellowship for Black Muslim young adults. She is also an Assistant Professor in Psychology and Muslim Studies at Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) and CTS' Project Director for the ASPIRE Project: Engaging Diverse Faith Communities in Anti-Racist Work. Her teaching, research and clinical areas of expertise include: mental health stigma in faith and racially minoritized communities, first generation college students and emerging adults of color; diversity, religious identity and multicultural issues in counseling, healing justice and faith based activism, racial trauma and healing, psychological impact of anti-Muslim bigotry and anti-Blackness, Black Muslim psychology and Black Muslim intersectional invisibility. Dr. Mu'Min Rashad graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a BA in Psychology and MEd in Psychological Services and completed a second Masters in Restorative Practices & Youth Counseling (MRP) from the International Institute for Restorative Practices. She is certified in Psychological First Aid and a certified instructor in Adult, Higher Education & Youth Mental Health First Aid. Dr. Mu'Min Rashad completed her doctorate in Clinical Psychology with a concentration in Couple and Family Therapy, at Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, PA.

Lady & Bird Films - Production Company

Lady & Bird is a female-run documentary production company focused on stories from underrepresented voices. The company was founded in 2021 by filmmakers Jennifer Tiexiera, Camilla Hall and Rita Baghdadi. Lady & Bird premiered *Sirens*, directed by Rita Baghdadi, in World Competition at Sundance 2022 and the film sold to Oscilloscope. *Subject* is the second Lady & Bird feature documentary to showcase this year with a premiere in competition at Tribeca.

PARTNERS

Fortune Favors Film

Fortune Favors Films develops, finances, and produces films that inspire people to explore the deep complexities of our world. By guiding and empowering the best filmmakers in the world, we will deliver storytelling and truth-seeking that enlightens and drives action. Our work will explore the spirit, motivations, and emotional complexities of visionary people. We will dig into the complex gray areas of humanity and our world. We will reveal that truths cannot be told in a headline or a social media post, but instead require research, perspective, time, and a voice. Fake News is just simple and lazy news—because Real News can't be delivered or received without depth and context. Those who are impacted by our stories will no longer accept a quick and easy answer to the questions that confront us everyday. They will be inspired to explore more measured and more critical thought, to journey a more daring path, to fight untruths and injustice. We will challenge people to choose a bolder and uncompromised path forward through life.

TIME Studios

TIME Studios is the Emmy award-winning television and film division of TIME, the global media brand that reaches a combined audience of more than 90 million globally. Built on the foundation of TIME's award-winning visual journalism, which has earned over 52 major awards and nominations in the last seven years, as well as 577 million video views across all platforms in 2019, TIME Studios harnesses the access and authority of one of the world's most trusted and respected brands to bring premium

truth-based programming to television and film around the world, while continuing to push the boundaries of journalism and visual storytelling through new cutting-edge mediums including virtual reality and augmented reality.

Bright West Entertainment

Bright West Entertainment is a film finance and production company launched in 2021 by producer Alex Lieberman. Focusing primarily on documentary content that brings unique voices and dynamic stories to the forefront, Bright West has already built an eclectic slate of more than a dozen projects that it is either co-financing or fully financing. Lieberman most recently served as co-executive producer on the feature film *Sirens*, which debuted in the World Documentary competition at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival. Bright West has three films premiering at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival and several others set to premiere later this year.

CREDITS

DIRECTORS

Jennifer Tiexiera and Camilla Hall

PRODUCERS

Camilla Hall, Jennifer Tiexiera, Joe Caterini, Margie Ratliff

WRITERS

Jennifer Tiexiera, Camilla Hall, Lauren Saffa

EDITOR

Lauren Saffa

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Zachary Shields

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Kameela Mu'Min Rashad, Logan Snyder, Alex Lieberman, and Gary Lieberman,
Alexandra Johnes and Loren Hammonds

COMPOSERS

Jonathan Kirkscey and Rafaël Leloup

CO-PRODUCER

Arthur Agee, Ahmed Hassan, Mukunda Angulo, Jessie Friedman, Susanne Reisenbichler,
Rita Baghdadi, Zachary Shields, Kelsey Oluk

CAST

Arthur Agee
Ahmed Hassan
Margie Ratliff
Michael Peterson
Mukunda Angulo
Jesse Friedman
Elaine Friedman
Lisa Walsh
Susanne Reisenbichler

FEATURING

Valerie Complex
Davis Guggenheim
Gordon Quinn
Bing Liu
Sonya Childress
Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson

Thom Powers
Caroline Libresco
Assia Boundaoui
Rebecca Day
Sam Pollard
Kirsten Johnson
Daresha Kyi
Patricia Aufderheide
Lonnie Soury
Evgeny Afineevsky

NOTABLE PRESS

[Camilla Hall's op-ed in The Guardian](#)

"I'd been grappling with the ethics of documentary film-making for a while. I'd seen the participants of my own projects struggle with the process of filming and wanted to better understand the complexities of what it meant to be on screen."

[Margie Ratliff's op-ed in The Lead](#)

"The film gave us a chance to finally speak out against the HBO series and use our experiences over such a long time with The Staircase documentary to highlight larger ethical questions within the documentary community at large."

[The Observer](#)

"It's thought-provoking stuff, which also explores our own role, as audience members, in the voracious demand for other people's stories."

[Vulture](#)

"As a viewer, how can we know that the documentary we're watching is ethical? And fair? And treating the subjects properly? And telling the true story?"

[The Guardian](#)

"[*Subject*] looks at what happens to participants in true-life dramas once the cameras have left and thoughtfully examines the duty of care that documentary makers owe to participants."

[The Hollywood Reporter](#)

"A documentary dork's delight. The starting point for a conversation about, depiction, exploitation and documentary ethics. Interesting and entertaining. I hope *SUBJECT* finds a home where many people can watch it, because this is a good start. I want more."

[Indiewire](#)

"[An] insightful ethical exploration. It's amazing the amount of content 'Subject' packs into a tight 90-minute package... There's a fluidity and grace to how Hall and Tiexiera dissect everything... Hall and Tiexiera create something incredibly special. A great place to start for getting at the heart of why audiences love the truth of documentary, and what that truth really means."

[Vanity Fair](#)

"In *Subject*, Ratliff suggests that documentary participants should have an organization to inform them of their rights, provide legal advice, and help navigate complicated consent issues."

FESTIVAL APPEARANCES

2022

Tribeca Film Festival (world premiere)
Aspen Film Festival
Sidewalk Film Festival
Camden International Film Festival
Atlantic International Film Festival
Getting Real
Calgary International Film Festival
Doctober
Refocus Film Festival
Chagrin Documentary Film Festival
Loft Film Festival
Dallas International Film Festival
Montclair Film Festival
Unorthodocs
Bozeman Doc Series
Windsor International Film Festival
Denver International Film Festival
AFI Fest
Fairhope Film Festival
Hamptons Doc Festival
Tahoe Film Festival

2023

Palm Springs International Film Festival
One Take Documentary Series
Big Sky Documentary Film Festival
Sedona International Film Festival
Belleville Downtown DocFest
Salt Spring Film Festival
CPH:DOX
Docville
Phoenix Film Festival
ACT Human Rights Film Festival
Cleveland International Film Festival
Hot Docs Doc Soup
Amherst Cinema Bellwether Series
Ashland Independent Film Festival
Wisconsin Film Festival
Milwaukee Film Festival
River Run Film Festival
Thin Line Film Fest
NorthwestFest
Millennium Docs Against Gravity