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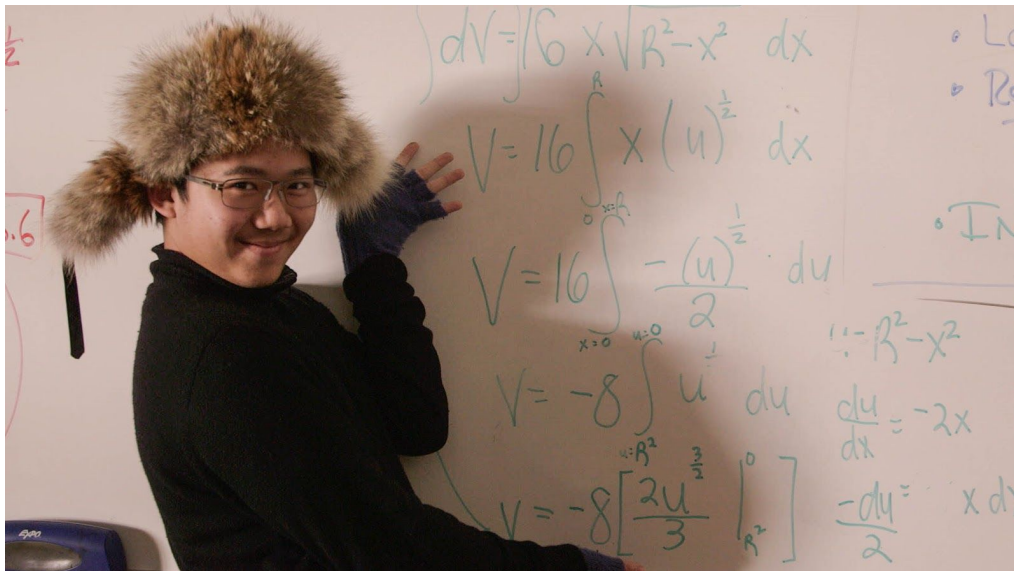
ITVS, The Center for Asian American Media, and California Humanities  
In Association with XTR  
Present

# TRY HARDER!

Directed and Produced by Debbie Lum

Produced by Nico Opper, Lou Nakasako

Executive Produced by Geralyn Dreyfous, Naja Pham-Lockwood, Jean Tsien



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**TRY HARDER! 2021 Sundance Film Festival Screenings**

**ONLINE WORLD PREMIERE - Saturday, January 30, 12:00 PM PST / 1:00 PM MST**

**SECOND SCREENING - Monday, February 1, 7:00 AM PST / 8:00 AM MST**

# **TRY HARDER! - Press Notes**

## **LOGLINE**

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In a world where cool kids are nerds, the orchestra is world class and being Asian American is the norm, seniors at Lowell High School compete for the top prize: admission to the college of their dreams.

## **SYNOPSIS**

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San Francisco's Lowell High, one of the best public schools in the country, draws high achievers--nearly 70% Asian Americans--from across the city into a fiercely competitive universe. The camera follows seniors through the hallways and into classrooms as the pressure intensifies to impress admissions officers at elite universities with their report cards, test scores, and overall awesomeness. The students proudly own their identity as nerds and tell their stories with candor and humor despite the stress. Will they achieve their dreams? What happens if they fail?

# TRY HARDER! - Press Notes

## FILMMAKER INTERVIEW - Debbie Lum

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### **1. How did this film come about? How did the idea originate? What inspired you?**

The students of Lowell High School captured my heart. At first, I thought I would explore the topic of elite college admissions through the perspective of mothers, especially the stereotype of Asian American “tiger mothers” who push hard for their children's academic achievement by any means necessary. I had just finished my last documentary, Seeking Asian Female which explores stereotypes and the fetishization of Asian women, and was trying to get my daughter into preschool. Around me, parents, especially moms, were stressing out about what they could do to set their 3-year old on a path that would lead to Harvard. There was a Harvard lawsuit alleging that Asian Americans were being discriminated against. Articles came out about high-priced college counselors urging Asian American students to "appear less Asian" in order to improve their chances with elite colleges. With ITVS Diversity Development Funding and an R&D grant from California Humanities, I set off on a path to make a film called My Tiger Mom, filming mothers, principals, psychologists, college advisors – and realized we needed to talk to students themselves.

In all the headlines-grabbing reports on the insanity of the college admissions process, the students who are at the heart of the story seem to be the last ones given a voice. We heard about a program at Lowell High School where kids as young as 14 do graduate level medical research at the world-renowned UCSF medical research labs. Once I landed at Lowell, and the students, faculty and administration opened their doors to us, we decided to switch gears and capture the story of how to get into a top American college through the students’ POV. Lowell High School, an iconic San Francisco institution and the oldest public high school west of the Mississippi River, had never had a feature-length documentary made about it. I couldn’t help thinking that, perhaps because Lowell had a large or predominantly Asian American student body for decades, this might have something to do with it. I went to a high school in America’s heartland, more reminiscent of The Breakfast Club, where being Asian American meant being either an outcast or invisible. I was fascinated by a high school universe where being Asian American was the norm. I’ve dedicated my filmmaking career to telling Asian American stories. I’m drawn to original, untold, authentic stories and this one really resonated for me.

In the last 10-15 years getting into college, especially a prestigious college has become extreme. College acceptance rates have fallen to single-digits, with Stanford and Harvard accepting between 4-5% of students who apply. Getting into college has become a high-stakes business for today’s tech-centric economy, the difference between having a high school diploma and a college degree, translates into a significant economic gap, the widest in 50 years. A degree from an elite college, the so-called “Ivy Plus” such as Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Duke, and a handful of others may mean more than double the future salary than a degree from a less exclusive college. At the same time, stress

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and anxiety levels have gone through the roof for high school and college aged students. What does it mean for teens as they enter young adulthood to see the college journey as one that will most likely lead to failure? What does this mean for our society's future leaders?

### **2. How long did it take to make the film? From concept to finish.**

All told, it has taken us more than 5 years. I first started researching the topic of "tiger mothers" in the SF Bay Area in 2014. A year later, we met some of the students who would become our main characters as I began interviewing so-called "tiger cubs" or children of immigrant Asian mothers who push for high achievement in school. By the time the next school year had begun, we had decided to take a deep dive into the Lowell story, focusing on one school year from start to finish, using production funds from California Humanities and Center for Asian American Media. It took us another year to raise the necessary funds through ITVS Open Call. With over 300 hours of footage, another year of editing, and the incredible support of film company XTR, we were finally able to push the film out. When Covid hit, as a mother of 3 kids in elementary school, I also became an ad hoc dean of our zoom elementary schools, adding further delays. Like the students we filmed, our entire film crew worked long and hard to make this documentary.

### **3. Why did you make this film?**

This is the first feature-length documentary about San Francisco's iconic Lowell High School. Established in 1856, Lowell is the oldest public high school west of the Mississippi and has long been the crown jewel of the San Francisco Unified School District, its name synonymous with excellence in high school education. Lowell is a college prep school that is free for all, and admission is based not on zip code but academic performance. Over the years, Lowell has also become known as an Asian American high school. Asian American students have made up its largest group of students for decades. Right now as public debate explodes over selective admission public high schools like Lowell, Stuyvesent and Boston Latin, and whether admission based on grades and tests is fair or biased, it is hard to ignore the large numbers of Asian American students at these high-achieving schools. Asian American Pacific Islanders represent a third of the population in San Francisco. Because most AAPI students don't have the economic means to go to private schools like the majority of white students do, they have become the dominant ethnic group in SF public schools. At Lowell High School, being Asian American is the norm.

In the immigrant Chinese community, where parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins plant dreams of attending Lowell into their kids' young minds as early as kindergarten, Lowell is the be-all-end all of schools. Tracking the narrative of the competitive college admissions journey was fascinating from a filmmaker's perspective, but I was also personally interested in what it would mean for an Asian American student to come of age in a high school where s/he was in the majority, so opposite my own experience. Once we spent time at Lowell and got to know our students, I committed to making this into a feature film because the kids opened up to us. They wanted a spotlight shined on what they were going through and who they were. I sensed a deep yearning for their stories to be told. The Harvard lawsuit was making its way through the courts, revealing how Asian Americans students

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were rated lower on personality by admissions officers. Although implicit bias and studies showed Asian Americans need to score hundreds of points higher than students of other ethnicities in order to be accepted, the courts still did not conclude that Harvard discriminated against Asian Americans. I wanted to understand what was behind this.

But less interested in the right or wrong, I wanted to know the impact on our community and ourselves. I wanted to understand our motivations and understand why we strive and who we are. AAPIs are the fastest growing ethnic group in the US, but we make up only 6% of the overall US population. Our stories have occupied the margins of official narratives of America despite our contributions to the American story (from railroads to agriculture to birthright citizenship to the Vietnam War and the list goes on). In the students I met, I sensed a deep yearning to break out of the singular stereotype that they were just the model minority, born to be smart, fierce, nameless, test-taking machines. The students we followed were so much more than a high test score and a data point. Each one was breaking free of their parents' hold on them in defining self, wrestling with pressure and growing up, growing into independence. It was this human story at the center of the college admissions frenzy that I wanted to tell.

### **4. Share a story about filming; anything that you found interesting along the way with your filming journey.**

We had read stories about applying to college and what slim odds students had for elite college acceptance. But we didn't know how brutal it would be to see students applying to 30 colleges because acceptance was equated not with student effort, but luck of the draw. Getting rejected by 20 schools, or worse, being waitlisted with more work and more waiting, then not getting financial aid, and ultimately not getting to make the decision to choose your own college, was a brutal and demoralizing process. Students told us horror stories of computer glitches sending out thousands of false acceptances only to be reversed 24-hours later. One of our students got up at 4am to check whether he was admitted to a UC because of a staggered alphabetical announcement to prevent system crashes. But at the same time, like soldiers in boot camp, the students went through it all together, and wore their scars like badges of courage.

Prom was interesting. Going with a prom date seemed to be the rare exception. Still the kids dressed up and looked ready for the red carpet in black tie and stunning ball gowns and stilettos. As the girls checked their coats many of them pulled running shoes or trainers out of their purses and then swapped into comfortable shoes. They wanted to hang out, stress-free, with a group of friends. In this upside-down high school universe, known for stress and competition, friendships and community was also brimming over. It was a place where our main character Shea noted, "you can nerd out on physics and not get shoved against a locker." Though one of our main character's Mom got a hotel room where prom was held - and waited for her at the end of the dance, many students had a dual life, hiding key details from their parents. One student told me she got into a top-ranked school but told her parents she was rejected just so she wouldn't be forced to go and face all that stress all over again.

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Lowell was their world, a respite from the grown-ups. The kids may all want their personal best, but joked about Asian F's (B+), Lowell Gods and Lowell's motto, "your best is never good enough since 1856." They wore their hard work on their sleeves (ie. t-shirts saying "LOWHELL"), revelled in their sleepless nights and did feel proud of their experiences even when they didn't earn admission to an elite college or the college of their dreams.

### **5. Did the film change from your original idea for the film as you were filming or in post?**

Try Harder! originally began as just one chapter of a personal essay documentary called My Tiger Mom, exploring why as mothers we are obsessed with getting our children into fancy colleges. My producer and cinematographer Lou Nakasako grew up in San Francisco, went through the SF public school system, and heard about the Lowell Science Research Program, an impressive club at Lowell High School where students do graduate-level science research at the nation's top medical lab, UCSF. Richard Shapiro founded this program along with Dr. Julia Ye (Lowell '99). Mr. Shapiro is a beloved physics teacher at Lowell, and a true believer in the arts. Having taught at Lowell for 30 years, seeing waves of students come through, he shared my fascination about why so many Asian Americans seem to do so well in school - was it character, grit, parental pressure, cultural pressure, the system - or just a bad stereotype? Teaching the reputedly hardest class at Lowell, Mr. Shapiro remembered his class in the 80's being predominantly ethnically Russian and Jewish and said there was a time when Lowell's nickname was Beth Low'ell. It was when Mr. Shapiro introduced us to Alvan and other students who would become our main characters that we became captivated by them and what they were going through, that this one chapter about the children of "tiger mothers" transformed into the entire film at Lowell. While funders urged me to continue my personal essay, I felt like I could not let the Lowell story go. The time was right to tell this story.

### **6. What were the challenges in making this film?**

The biggest challenges we had were in fundraising. Lol. I joke but raising funds for independent filmmaking is actually no joke, particularly for stories with marginalized communities occupying center stage, and funders worrying, how will viewers relate to a story whose characters are different?

Filming at the largest public high school in San Francisco was always challenging. We re-lived high school in the filming of this story, shooting over 300 hours of footage, meeting hundreds of students and faculty during casting and production. Our core team, producer/cinematographer Lou Nakasako, field producer Lauren Kawana and myself spent almost two years at Lowell and continued to track our main subjects as they went off to college. Each school day we spent an incredible amount of leg work to get access to find the moments that were spontaneous and authentic. We were a small lithe crew filming at the whim of very responsible yet very busy teenagers, who believed that getting into college was far more important than making a documentary. During school hours they had no downtime, thus we had no downtime. Not knowing how their story would turn out, we followed more than five students to see who would get accepted at their dream school or not. High school is a lot harder than it was when we went through it. By graduation, we were exhausted.

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Editing was and perhaps always is, the most challenging part of making documentaries. In post, we had to make hard decisions to eliminate storylines and balance the narratives of five students against a backdrop of a unique high school that was a character unto itself. It required a lot of hard work and deft editing by amazing editors, Andrew Gersh, Amy Ferraris who was also co-producer, and Victoria Chalk. Scripts are written in post and doc-makers are beholden to their characters' reality in telling an authentic story. Three of our students are Asian American, one is bi-racial black/white and another is white. Along the way, some suggested we cut out two of our Asian American characters. I felt strongly that this was an injustice to the story of a high school that has been predominantly Asian American for decades and the time was overripe for Asian Americans to occupy center stage as protagonists in the story. Telling Asian American stories - stories about marginalized communities that sometimes go counter to the mainstream - always present challenges to how we tell stories. It required deft editing and lots of patience to do justice to the students in our film and their stories.

### **7. What were the successes that you had in making this film?**

Alvan, the son of a first-generation Taiwanese immigrant mother and mainland Chinese immigrant father describes in the film how Chinese and other Asians who are raised to value humility have difficulty "selling themselves" or inflating or just even presenting who they are on college applications in America. This cultural difference as well as trust in the storyteller, perhaps contributes to how difficult it is to capture marginalized stories in documentaries. We feel very fortunate that the students we followed let us tell their story and had the courage to open up to us during an incredibly scary, pivotal time in their lives. Our film tells the college admissions story through a student lens, capturing their voices and perspectives. That immersive experiential feeling in Try Harder! is what makes it succeed as a film.

### **8. What do you want audiences to take away from this film?**

Try Harder! takes audiences on a journey to experience what it feels like to finish the last year of high school, and against impossible odds, try to achieve one's high school dreams, sometimes succeeding but often failing. I'd like students, parents, educators and audiences in general to get through to the other side of this stressful, difficult journey. High school has changed in the last decade and today academic pressure is the leading cause of stress in teens over "fitting in" or "looking good". Getting into a brand-name college can feel like a life or death matter to students and perhaps even more so their parents. In the Bay Area many high school principals are on suicide watch and many students finish high school feeling cynical that trying hard isn't enough. Success through education has been foundational in our society and particularly in the Asian American community where educational achievement is the lifeblood coursing through our communities veins. For immigrants who have historically been in survival mode, striving to succeed through education has been the means— and at all costs, and there has been a lot of sacrifice. For our community and society at large, we often strive with little time for reflection.

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I hope Try Harder! can be a mirror that allows viewers to reflect on how this process has impacted who we are, why we strive and our relationships between young people and parents. I hope audiences walk away knowing that the students of Lowell High School are much more than test score and high-ranking GPA. I'd like the human factor in the "college application industrial complex" to come to the fore.

Shea, one of our main subjects told us "There's a huge generational divide. Anyone over the age of 35 has no idea what the college admissions experience is like. They haven't experienced it." I hope audiences can experience this story with them.

### **9. Was there something special technically that you utilized in making this film - your cameras or sound or editing etc... and why were these important.**

In the field, we kept it simple, and took our time filming in a way that made students comfortable. The most technically advanced part of the film was working with editors across the bay in Oakland, Portland, OR and Los Angeles. Even before sheltering at home, we were using Facetime and file sharing to work simultaneously in remote locations, and then we switched to zoom and Kast. But truthfully, there's no fancy technology in the making of this film -- just good old fashioned blood sweat and tears.

### **10. Where do you find inspiration or who/what has influenced you as a filmmaker?**

I always dreamed of making narrative films, growing up behind the St. Louis Cinema in America's heartland during the original Star Wars generation. I saw Poltergeist at a Drive-in, laughed until my stomach hurt watching Love and Death on VHS, way back when, before anyone knew better. We spent summers on Oahu, where my father was born and raised, and on Saturdays watched recycled Hong Kong period martial arts movies for \$1 a ticket. My father also took us to the Oscar contenders, Spielberg blockbusters and age-inappropriate art house films like Ran or Picnic at Hanging Rock that burned into my consciousness and inhabited my dreams. My mom, who grew up in New York City rebelling from her traditional Chinese parents, dreamed that her children would be artists and curated avant-garde cinema for an art collective she ran. We didn't have 100's of channels of television or Tik Tok, Kindle and pushed news feeds. Cinema was an immersive experience.

When Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing and Jungle Fever came out, I loved how African Americans were always front and center in his films. Growing up, I always felt like being Chinese American was front and center in who I was and how I saw myself. Being different - being a minority - was my worldview. After college I traveled to Taipei, and remember vividly the first time I saw City of Sadness, Hou Xiao-hsien's masterpiece set in Taiwan in the 1940s, at an "MTV" screening room. I had never seen a Chinese face in a movie wearing anything other than a historical period costume. It was the closest any movie came to touching on something that actually happened in my own personal history. Up to that point movies had always shown me someone else's point of view. I'd been studying Asian cinema abroad, learning about Satyajit Ray's Apu Trilogy, the 5th generation Chinese filmmakers like Yellow Earth and Red Sorghum, and was mesmerized by Shohei Imamura's The Eel and Back Rain. I came back to the US and made San Francisco a transplanted home. I met Spencer



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Nakasako, who co-directed, co-wrote and starred in *Life is Cheap But Toilet Paper Is Expensive*. Spencer was straddling the worlds of fiction and documentary and hired me to work as an editor on his ground-breaking documentary, a.k.a. *Don Bonus* in which he gave 17-year-old Cambodian American Sokly Ny a video diary to film his own story. Spencer schooled me in Asian American cinema, Loni Ding and Wayne Wang, how to hone narrative in 3 acts in documentary, how to make a film through grit, authenticity without fancy camerawork but dedication to a story and a character.

Today I could list a zillion films that inspire me. *Stories We Tell*, *Dear White People*, *The Piano*, *The Gleaners and I*, *Cameraperson*, *Dancer in the Dark*, *Punch Drunk Love*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *Juno*, *Children of Invention*, *Intimate Stranger*, *Irma Vep*, *Minari*, so many others...

### **11. Anything else you want to add about the making of the film and its importance?**

#### **Extras**

Filming at the largest public high school in San Francisco was always challenging. We re-lived high school in the filming of this story. Lou, we joked, looked more like a Lowell student than the graduate of UCLA's film program that he was, and each day we spent an incredible amount of leg work to get access to find the moments that were spontaneous and authentic. Lowell's physics teachers – Mr. Shapiro, Cooley, Dickerman, Prothro and Calc teacher Mr. Cohen, welcomed us into their cramped office as we set up shop next to their mini fridge and microwave to make this happen. For the scores of high school movies that have been made from *The Breakfast Club* to *Hoop Dreams*, a high school like Lowell where nerds are the norm, had not been defined on film.

## TRY HARDER! - Press Notes

### ABOUT THE STUDENTS

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**Alvan Cai** - Dabmaster, class clown, aspiring surgeon and son of Taiwanese immigrants, Alvan's working hard to outgrow the "tiny little box" his mom keeps him in.

**Shea Fairchild** - Skinny white kid who likes to be surrounded by "a bunch of Asian mes", future climate change leader...

**Rachael Schmidt** - Biracial African American PSAT whiz, burgeoning writer and journalist, wants to make her mama proud and has her eyes set on an Ivy. Speaks up about anti-Blackness at Lowell.

**Ian Wang** - Lowell's resident satirist and young sage, always ready with a witty remark, notes early on that "Jonathan Chu was destined for greatness."

**Sophia Wu** - Captain of the tennis club, editor of the school paper, ice cream scooper, doesn't flinch at a bowling ball flying toward her face, "the kind of person who can handle a lot of things at once."

## **TRY HARDER! - Press Notes**

### **ABOUT LOWELL HIGH SCHOOL**

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**-Lowell is the top-ranked public high school in San Francisco.**

**-Lowell admits only the highest performing students from all over the city.**

**-Over 40% of Lowell students come from low-income households.**

**-Lowell's student body is nearly 70% Asian American Pacific Islander, of which the majority are Chinese American.**

**-Stanford University is one of 150 colleges that visit Lowell High School every year to recruit its seniors.**

## TRY HARDER! - Press Notes

### FILMMAKER BIOS

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#### **Director/Producer, Debbie Lum**

Debbie Lum is an award-winning San Francisco-based filmmaker whose projects give voice to the Asian American experience and other unsung stories. *SEEKING ASIAN FEMALE*, her feature-length directing debut premiered at SXSW, aired on PBS' Independent Lens and won numerous awards, including Best of Fest (Silverdocs), Best Feature Documentary (CAAMFest) and Outstanding Director (Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival). It was also profiled on PRI's *This American Life*. The film was a "fan favorite" on PBS and alongside its broadcast premiere, Lum launched [theyreallsobeautiful.com](http://theyreallsobeautiful.com), a companion website and 5-part short video series about race and dating. Previously she worked as a documentary editor; her editing credits include *A.K.A DON BONUS* (winner, National Emmy), *KELLY LOVES TONY* (nominee, IDA Best Documentary), which she also co-produced and *TO YOU SWEETHEART, ALOHA* (winner, Audience Award, VC LA Film Festival). She has also written and directed several short comedies, *CHINESE BEAUTY*, *A GREAT DEAL!* and *ONE APRIL MORNING*, which screened at the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival among many others. She has an M.F.A in Cinema from San Francisco State University, a B.A. in Religious Studies from Brown University.

#### **Producer, Nico Opper**

Nico Opper is an Emmy®-nominated director and producer who has been featured in *Filmmaker Magazine's* annual "25 New Faces of Independent Film", *Indiewire Magazine's* "25 LGBT Filmmakers on the Rise", and *DOC NYC's* "40 Under 40" list of documentary talents. Their work has screened at The Tribeca Film Festival, Hot Docs, Los Angeles Film Festival, AFI Docs and Guadalajara Int'l Film Festival. Their debut feature film *Off and Running* premiered at Tribeca and received the Best Documentary Award at Outfest, The WGA Award for Best Documentary Screenplay and multiple audience awards. It aired on P.O.V. and was nominated for a national Emmy. Their episodic series *The F Word* was nominated for a Gotham Award for Breakthrough Series and an IDA Award for Best Short Series, and named one of the best short form series of the year by Indiewire. Opper is the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship and a 2020 Eureka Fellowship. They're an alum of Film Independent, Tribeca Film Institute, Chicken and Egg Pictures, Point Foundation and NYU Film School.

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### **Producer/Cinematographer, Lou Nakasako**

Lou Nakasako worked as a camera assistant on both CRIP CAMP, which premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, and HBO's WE ARE THE DREAM: THE KIDS OF OAKLAND MLK ORATORICAL FEST. He was the assistant director on FREELAND, which premiered at the 2020 SXSW Film Festival, and a co-editor on Michael Siv's DAZE OF JUSTICE, which aired on PBS's DocWorld program in 2019. His short narrative film, BROTHERS, which won UCLA's award for Best Undergraduate Screenplay, was screened in the prestigious UCLA Directors Spotlight as one of the program's top nine films of the year, and went on to play at numerous film festivals, among them CAAMFest, Los Angeles Asian Pacific American Film Festival, and Toronto Reel Asian Film Festival. He has a B.A from the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television.

### **Cinematographer, Kathy Huang**

Kathy Huang is a Taiwanese-American filmmaker with a strong interest in issues of identity and belonging. Her feature-length directing debut, TALES OF THE WARIA, was funded by ITVS and the Center for Asian American Media, and follows a community of transgender women in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, as they search for romance and intimacy. The film received multiple Audience Choice Awards, and was broadcast nationally on PBS in 2012. She is currently working on GUANGZHOU LOVE STORY, a multi-year portrait of an African-Chinese family navigating a rising tide of nationalism and xenophobia in mainland China. Kathy received her Master's in Documentary Film Production from Stanford University and currently lives in Los Angeles, where she teaches filmmaking at UCLA and Chapman University.

### **Editor, Andrew Gersh**

Andrew Gersh is an award-winning documentary film editor based in Portland, Oregon and the San Francisco Bay Area. His latest feature documentaries include CRIP CAMP: A Disability Revolution, winner of the Audience Award for U.S. Documentary at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival. CRIP CAMP was acquired by the Obamas' Higher Ground Productions and Netflix, and has been nominated for both Critics Choice and International Documentary Association Best Editing awards. For REAL BOY, he was awarded the Karen Schmeer Excellence in Documentary Editing Award at the 2016 Independent Film Festival Boston (IFFBoston 2016), and the James Lyons Editing Award For Documentary Feature at the 2016 Woodstock Film Festival. The film has won best-of-fest awards around the world, with a national broadcast on PBS' Independent Lens. SPARK: A Burning Man Story premiered at the 2013 South by Southwest (SXSW) Film Festival, was an official selection to both Seattle International and Ashland Independent film festivals, and was the opening-night film of the 2013 San Francisco DocFest. THE REVOLUTIONARY OPTIMISTS was awarded the Hilton Worldwide LightStay Sustainability Award at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival and aired nationally on PBS' Independent Lens, followed by ITVS Community Cinema screenings and a national theatrical release. The film was also nominated for a 2014 News and Documentary Emmy® Award. Other recent work includes WORLDS OF URSULA K. LE GUIN (Sheffield Doc/Fest, PBS' American Masters), ASK NOT (San Francisco International Film Festival, MoMA, PBS' Independent Lens), DADDY DON'T GO (DOC NYC, Cleveland International Film Festival, STARZ Network) and READY, SET

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BAG! (Los Angeles International Film Festival), as well as numerous films for PBS' FRONTLINE. Gersh also works regularly as an editorial consultant, and is a Sundance Institute Documentary Edit and Story Lab Fellow.

### **Co-Producer & Editor, Amy Ferraris**

Amy Ferraris is a filmmaker and editor whose feature editing credits include SEEKING ASIAN FEMALE and THE GRACE LEE PROJECT, both of which premiered at South by Southwest. Her work has enjoyed great success on the festival circuit, including at Tribeca, LAFF, True/False, DocNZ and AFIDocs, where it won "Best of Fest." She is currently a producer and editor on THE GATEKEEPER, a feature-length documentary that explores why math literacy is important on a large scale—for an equitable society and an engaged citizenry—and how we can transform math education toward those aims.

Ms. Ferraris' broadcast work has appeared on PBS, the Sundance Channel, the Discovery Networks, NatGeo, and A&E, among others. She is also the producer/director of THE PERFECT CAPPUCCINO, a feature documentary about coffee, consumerism, and being American. Ms. Ferraris currently lives in Oakland with her partner and their two children.

### **Executive Producer, Jean Tsien**

Jean Tsien is a veteran documentary editor, producer, and story consultant. In 2020, she served as a producer on 76 DAYS and an executive producer on the series Asian Americans. Her editing credits include: SOMETHING WITHIN ME, SCOTTSBORO: AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY, MALCOLM X: MAKE IT PLAIN, SOLAR MAMAS, PLEASE VOTE FOR ME, DIXIE CHICKS: SHUT UP & SING, MISS SHARON JONES! And THE APOLLO. Her credits as an executive producer include PLASTIC CHINA, PLEASE REMEMBER ME, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF DESIRE and OUR TIME MACHINE. Born in Taiwan, she is based in New York City.

### **Executive Producer, GERALYN DREYFOUS**

Geralyn Dreyfous has a wide, distinguished background in the arts, extensive experience in consulting in the philanthropic sector, and participates on numerous boards and initiatives. She is the Founder of the Utah Film Center, a non-profit that curates free screenings and outreach programs for communities throughout Utah. In 2007, she co-founded Impact Partners Film Fund with Dan Cogan, bringing together financiers and filmmakers so that they can create great films that entertain audiences, enrich lives, and ignite social change. In 2013, GERALYN co-founded Gamechanger Films, the first for-profit film fund dedicated exclusively to financing narrative features directed by women. GERALYN's independent executive producing and producing credits include the Academy Award-winning BORN INTO BROTHELS; Emmy-nominated THE DAY MY GOD DIED, Academy Award-nominated and Emmy Award-winning THE SQUARE, Academy Award-nominated and Peabody Award-winning THE INVISIBLE WAR, and multiple film festival winners such as MISS REPRESENTATION, MEET THE PATELS, ANITA, IN FOOTBALL WE TRUST, THE HUNTING GROUND, DREAMCATCHER and ALIVE INSIDE. Her works in production include: WAIT FOR ME and BE

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NATURAL. Geralyn was honored by the International Documentary Association with the Amicus Award in 2013 for her significant contribution to documentary filmmaking. Variety recognized Geralyn in their 2014 Women's Impact Report highlighting her work in the entertainment industry.

### **Executive Producer, Naja Pham Lockwood**

An investor, patron and collaborator of social change through film and the arts, Naja is the Founder of RYSE Media which supports stories of diverse voices. Her independent executive producing and philanthropic credits include 76 DAYS, academy nominated LAST DAYS IN VIETNAM, PBS *Asian Americans* film series, Toronto International Film Festival premiere of COMING HOME AGAIN, GOOK, CRIES FROM SYRIA and FIRST DAYS with StoryCorp. The First Days Project is a collaboration between StoryCorps and PBS which aimed to collect, preserve and celebrate the stories of Vietnamese American refugees and Vietnam veterans throughout America. Naja is an Associate Instructor at the University of Utah focusing on Asia and Global Cinema. Naja was an investor in Impact Partner Films. She was part of Silicon Valley's campaign to fund and support CRAZY RICH ASIANS that have blazed a pathway for greater Asian-American representation. She served on the Sundance Utah Advisory Board, working with Utah legislators and leaders to support the initiatives of Sundance. She partnered with Sundance Institute to help build and fund the Sundance Screenwriters Fellowships for Asian Americans filmmakers. She currently serves on the Board of Utah Film Commission and Center for Asian America Media (CAAM). As a refugee, Naja continues to advocate for immigrants from her undergraduate years with Phillips Brooks House, Harvard University to her current work with the Governor's Workforce Services and Catholic Community Services in Utah. She is the Founder and CEO of [www.najalockwooddesigns.com](http://www.najalockwooddesigns.com) to support female artisans of Southeast Asia.

### **Executive Producer, Yun-Fang Juan**

Yun-Fang Juan is an engineer, investor and entrepreneur. She is the founder of Brighter Capital which invests in early stage companies that are building a brighter future today. As an angel investor, she has invested in over 150 startups and has seen many companies go from founding to near unicorn status. As a food and logistics fanatic, she owns Zumplings and [routemyorders.com](http://routemyorders.com). She is a co-creator of Facebook Ads and a co-inventor of 10+ software patents. Yun-Fang graduated from National Taiwan University and immigrated to the USA in 2000.

### **Executive Producer, Tracy Chou**

Tracy Chou is an entrepreneur and software engineer, known for her work advocating for diversity and inclusion in tech. She is currently the founder and CEO of Block Party, which aims to fight abuse and harassment online. She is also a co-founder of Project Include, a non-profit that works with startups on diversity and inclusion towards the goal of creating a tech ecosystem where everyone has a fair chance to succeed. In 2013, her Medium article "Where are the numbers?" helped jumpstart the practice of tech companies disclosing their diversity data. Tracy was previously an engineer at Pinterest, Quora, and the U.S. Digital Service, and has been recognized as MIT Technology Review 35 Innovators under 35 and Forbes Tech 30 under 30. The daughter of Taiwanese immigrants, Tracy grew up in the Bay

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Area and was fortunate to realize the local Asian American dream of attending Stanford University, where she studied electrical engineering and computer science and was a Terman Fellow and Mayfield Fellow. She can be found perpetually online tweeting as @triketora.

### **CREDITS LIST:**

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Director & Producer	Debbie Lum
Producers	Lou Nakasako Nico Opper
Cinematographers	Kathy Huang Lou Nakasako
Editors	Andrew Gersh
Editor & Co-Producer	Amy Ferraris
Executive Producers	Lois Vossen Sally Jo Fifer Tony Hsieh Roberto Grande Mimi Pham Kathryn Everett Bryn Mooser Naja Pham Lockwood Geraldyn Dreyfous Yun-Fang Juan Tracy Chou Jean Tsien
Composer	Diana Salier
Animator	Leah Nichols
Story Consultant	Spencer Nakasako
Field Producer	Lauren Kawana



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Associate Producer	Tiffany Shan Katarina Shih Michelle Wang
Supervising Producer for ITVS	Michael Ehrenzweig
Additional Editing	Victoria Chalk
Additional Camera	S. Leo Chiang Daniel Chien Jim Jung Do Choi Mario Furloni Sean Havey Lauren Kawana
Sound	Sean Havey Lauren Kawana
Online Editor	Color A Go-Go
Sound Mixer	Dan Olmstead
Assistant to Producer	Michelle Wang
Production Assistant	Xin Hu Alexander Irwin Jenna Vaccaro
Bookkeeper	Jane Greenberg
Fiscal Sponsor	Catticus Corporation / Shirley Kessler
Production Legal Services	Focus Media Law Group / Justine Jacob
Advisor	Julie Soo
Poster Design	Yen Tan
Post Production Services	Color a Go Go
DI Colorist	Kent Pritchett
DI Producer	Kim Salyer

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Mike Burton

Assistant Colorist

Shalev Alon

Score Mixer