Babochki Collective presents

A CITY IN THE FOREST

A LEVOMEL / Yarrow Production

In Association with Vacationland Films, Media Team,
Atlanta Community Press Collective, Royal Muster, Ford Foundation JustFilms

Directed by Lev Omelchenko and Nolan Huber
Produced by Ike Rofé
Edited by Emily Yue

Sheffield 20DocFest 26 – SPECIAL MENTION INTERNATIONAL FIRST FEATURE COMPETITION
Special Mention HUMAN RIGHTS DOX Competition – :DOKU FEST 2026
INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL – International Competition – Jury Special Mention 2026
BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE – NASHVILLE FILM FESTIVAL 2026
OFFICIAL SELECTION – NEW/NEXT FILM FEST 2026
TACOMA FILM FESTIVAL 2026 – Official Selection
Official Selection – GUELPH FILM FESTIVAL 2026
The 62nd Chicago International Film Festival 2026
NEW ORLEANS FILM FESTIVAL – 2026 OFFICIAL SELECTION
FESTIVAL DE SEVELIN OFFICIAL SELECTION 2026

99 mins | USA | 2026

With Support From

JustFilms FORDFOUNDATION
SDF SOUTHERN DOCUMENTARY FUND
WINNER GRAND JURY PRIZE MOUNTAINFILM COMMITMENT GRANT
FREEDOM OF THE PRESS FOUNDATION
Scottish Documentary Institute
MFIA at Yale Law School

Sales Contact
Amanda Lebow – CAA
amanda.lebow@caa.com

Festival Distribution
Jeffrey Winter - The Film Collaborative
jeffrey@thefilmcollaborative.org

Production Contact
Ike Rofé
rofe.ike@gmail.com

LOGLINE

In Atlanta, a decentralized resistance movement rallies to defend an urban forest from the construction of Cop City, the United States' largest police training facility.

SYNOPSIS

When the city of Atlanta announces plans to build the largest police training center in the US—destroying a vital urban forest in the process—a decentralized activist movement mobilizes to stop "Cop City". Forest defenders occupy the Weelaunee forest, disrupting construction through direct action. Their resistance delays the progress of police militarization, but the celebration is cut short when police raid the camp and kill one of the activists, Tortuguita. Grief turns to defiance as protests spill into the streets, transforming a local land struggle into a national reckoning over policing, environmental justice, and democracy. With rare access, *A City in the Forest* witnesses the power of collective organizing in an urgent and historic struggle.

KEY TEAM BIOS

Lev Omelchenko – Co-Director, Co-Director of Photography
Lev Omelchenko is an Emmy Award Winning film director and cinematographer based in Atlanta, GA. He is an Ukrainian-born Brooklyn-raised immigrant. Utilizing both documentary and narrative forms, Lev's work focuses on telling poetic and cinematic stories of joyful militancy in the American South. His feature documentary *A City in the Forest* had its 2026 World Premiere at Sheffield DocFest where it won a Special Mention in the International First Feature Competition. His previous films *Beneath the Concrete the Forest (2023), Twenty (2023) and Free Noir Papillon (2022)* have screened and won awards across major US festivals including New Orleans Film Festival, Brooklyn Film Festival, Indie Memphis and Prismatic Ground.

Nolan Huber – Co-Director, Co-Director of Photography
Nolan Huber is an Emmy Award–winning director, cinematographer, and video journalist whose work blends cinematic storytelling with urgent, real-world stakes. As Head of Video News at the Atlanta Community Press Collective, their award-winning work helped redefine local independent news through engaging visual journalism. Huber's work has been featured by Rolling Stone, NPR, PBS, Al Jazeera, VICE, and More Perfect Union and they've directed projects for Pineapple Street Studios, PolicyLink, The Debt Collective, and the Union of Southern Service Workers.

Ike Rofé – Producer
Ike Rofé is a documentary filmmaker whose nonfiction work immerses viewers into the worlds of artists and activists. His projects have been supported by ITVS, Catapult Film Fund, Ford Foundation, and Freedom of the Press Foundation, among others. He is the Producer of A City in the Forest (2026), Querida Fátima (2026), and three more independent documentary features slated to release in 2026 and 2027. While at VICE Media, he created and directed the Webby Award-winning Street Food Icons, VICE's most viewed digital series.

Emily Yue – Editor
Emily Yue is a filmmaker and film editor currently based in Boston. Emily's work is rooted in centering marginalized voices with an intersectional lens, and has been supported by the Sundance Institute, the Points North Institute, and the LEF Foundation. As an editor, Emily works across documentary and fiction and is an alumni of the Karen Schmeer Film Editing Fellowship and the Sundance Contributing Editor Fellowship. Some of Emily's recent post-production credits include Spermworld (2024), How to Blow Up a Pipeline (2022), and The Rescue (2021).

Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe - Composer
Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe (b. 1975) is an artist, curator and composer that works primarily with, but not limited to voice and modular synthesizer for sound works in the realm of spontaneous music. The sensitivity of analogue modular synthesis echoes the organic nature of vocal expression which lends itself to Lowe's aleatoric process. Along with analog video synthesis works, he has an A/V practice that has been a focus of live performance and installation/exhibition. Robert has worked with such filmmakers as Yance Ford, Nia DaCosta, Daniel McCabe, Brett Story, Steve Maing, Mariama Diallo and more.

Gisela Fulla-Silvestre - Sound Designer
Gisela Fulla-Silvestre is a music producer, performer, sound designer and mixer originally from Barcelona and currently living and working in Brooklyn. Some of her credits include the award-winning narrative films "Suite Française", "The Europa Report" and Larry Clark's "Marfa Girl." Performing under the name NOIA, Gisela combines traditional singing with electronic production and has released two albums via Cascine Records.

Technical Data

A City in the Forest
Length: 99 minutes
Picture: Color, B&W 16:9
Shooting Format: Digital, 16mm, miniDV
Screening copy: DCP 4K Flat
Frame Rate: 24
unencrypted
Sound: 5.1, Stereo
Original Language: English, Spanish
Country of Production: USA
Year of Production: 2026
World Premiere: Sheffield DocFest (2026) Special Mention award in International First Feature Competition
Accessibility Features: Subtitles, Captions

Awards:

Sheffield DocFest - Special Mention in International First Feature Competition (World Premiere, June 2026)
DokuFest - Special Mention in Human Rights Dox Competition (Kosovo Premiere, August 2026)
DMZ Docs - Special Mention in International Competition (Asian Premiere, September 2026)
Nashville Film Festival - Best Feature Documentary (TN Premiere, September 2026)

Screenings:
Lemesos International Documentary Festival - Official Selection (Cyprus Premiere, August 2026)
Festival de Sevelin - Official Selection (Swiss Premiere, September 2026)
A City in the Forest Festival (US Premiere, September 2026)
New/Next Film Festival - Official Selection (MD Premiere, October 2026)
Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival - Critics Choice Juried Competition (AR Premiere, October 2026)
Chicago International Film Festival - Official Selection (IL Premiere, October 2026)
Green Festival of San Francisco - Closing Night Film (CA Premiere, October 2026)
Tacoma Film Festival - Official Selection (WA Premiere, October 2026)
New Orleans Film Festival - Documentary Feature Competition (LA Premiere, October 2026)
DocNYC - Blue Docs (NY Premiere, Nov 2026)
Cucalorus - Official Selection (NC Premiere, Nov 2026)

Press:
WABE - ‘A City in the Forest’ documentary reveals joy, risks during ‘Stop Cop City’ movement
Baltimore Beat - New/Next Film Festival is back
Sheffield DocFest DocCritic Review

Downloadable Links
STILLS
POSTERS
TEAM HEADSHOTS
CAPTIONS

DIRECTORS STATEMENT / NOTE ON SECURITY

We are Atlantans. The air we breathe comes from the trees that make our home “A City in the Forest.” When our trees are cut down, our neighborhoods flood and our waterways are polluted with runoff. Given our connection to this city, this land, we were the only filmmakers given permission to film inside the forest during the initial occupation, the only filmmakers invited to film Mvskoke ceremonies, and the only filmmakers invited to film various sit-ins and clandestine direct actions. From the beginning we felt it was paramount that this story be told by locals who are committed to a grounded, unflinching depiction of the movement to Stop Cop City that prioritizes the voices of local organizers, forest defenders, and those indigenous to this land.

As storytellers, we are influenced by our participants’ varying worldviews. This is a story of an intersectional movement, so we have centered the voices of Mvskoke leaders, Black organizers and queer folks as participants, and are ardently committed to not whitewashing their cultures, experiences, and perspectives. Originally, our core team was all white, though we come with immigrant, queer, and disabled backgrounds. Thanks to eventual funding, we were able to properly compensate BIPOC artists who have brought a unique perspective into this nuanced story. It is crucial that everyone we’ve brought onto our team works with an anti-racist and anti-colonial ethic front of mind.

Our team also took thorough precautions to protect our participants, ourselves, and our footage. We documented the frontlines of a protest movement that consistently faced surveillance, criminalization, and police repression. While filming, every member of our film team faced repression in one form or another. One director was arrested, our camera operator was detained, and the police shot our drone out of the sky—all while we were acting within our rights. To mitigate this risk, we received pro bono legal support from the Yale Doc Project, as well as the University of Georgia’s First Amendment Clinic. When it comes to our participants, we’ve centered their needs and consent, to make sure to avoid causing any additional trauma through our filmmaking process. We took several security measures to protect the identity of our sources who requested anonymity, and to protect the safety of our footage. These include using encrypted messaging tools, voice modulation, voice actors, blurring identifiable features, and using simple identity-concealing techniques like balaclavas. We utilize hard drive encryption, backups of footage stored out of state, and an understanding of our rights under Georgia’s SHIELD law. Due to the domestic terrorism and RICO cases related to our film, we took measures to ensure we have a legal and security plan in case our footage is subpoenaed. We receive security counsel from Freedom of the Press Foundation (FPF), an organization that protects, defends, and empowers public-interest journalism in the 21st century. Our process follows FPF’s risk assessment strategy.

- Lev and Nolan