

SUNDANCE INSTITUTE



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SUNDANCE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES *FILM FORWARD: ADVANCING CULTURAL DIALOGUE* TO BE PRESENTED IN JACKSON & PINEY WOODS, MISSISSIPPI SEPTEMBER 26 – OCTOBER 8

The Piney Woods School, the Mississippi Film Office and Crossroads Film Society
Collaborate with the International *Film Forward* Initiative

Oscar-Nominated Filmmaker Debra Granik (*Winter's Bone*) and Vikramaditya Motwane (*Udaan*)
Among Featured Participants for Screenings and Workshops

All Events are Free and Open to the Public

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI (September 12, 2011) — *Film Forward: Advancing Cultural Dialogue*, a Sundance Institute initiative in partnership with U.S. federal cultural agencies, will present a broad spectrum of film screenings and workshops in Jackson and Piney Woods, Mississippi September 26 – October 8, in conjunction with the historic Piney Woods School, the Mississippi Film Office and Crossroads Film Society. All events are free and open to the public.

Among the events taking place at The Piney Woods School, the flagship of four remaining historically African-American boarding schools in the U.S., are an October 7 screening of *Winter's Bone* and Q&A with filmmaker Debra Granik, and an October 8 screening of *Udaan* and Q&A with filmmaker Vikramaditya Motwane. Both *Udaan* and *Winter's Bone* navigate the transition to adulthood and re-define family in broadly different circumstances. Granik and Motwane will also meet with members of The Piney Woods School Film Club. In addition to the *Winter's Bone* and *Udaan* screenings on October 7-8, daily film screenings will take place September 26-30 and include showings of *A Small Act* (USA), *Afghan Star* (Afghanistan), *Amreeka* (USA), *Boy* (NZ), *Freedom Riders* (USA), *La Mission*, (USA), *Last Train Home* (China) and *Son of Babylon* (Iraq).

"The Piney Woods School is a wonderful institution that is distinct in its goal to bring education and advancement to an underserved community, which is completely in line with the goals of *Film Forward*," said Keri Putnam, Executive Director of Sundance Institute. "The depth of *Film Forward* activities planned in Jackson and Piney Woods are poised to engage diverse audiences and create meaningful dialogue about the power of film, as we've seen happen in the other locations the initiative has visited."

Events in Jackson, Mississippi will be hosted by Jackson State University and the Mississippi Museum of Art. Daily film screenings at Jackson State University October 2-6 will showcase the nine films from the *Film Forward* program. On October 6, a morning screening of *Winter's Bone* at Jackson State University will be followed by a Q&A with filmmaker Debra Granik, and an afternoon screening of *Udaan* will be followed by a Q&A with filmmaker Vikramaditya Motwane. That same day, musician Marideth Sisco, featured in *Winter's Bone*, will perform with the Jackson State University Jazz Band on the campus.

Events at the Mississippi Museum of Art include an October 8 Script-to-Screen Workshop focusing on the creative process of being a director. Filmmakers Debra Granik (*Winter's Bone*) and Vikramaditya

Motwane (*Udaan*) will participate in the workshop, which will be facilitated by Alesia Weston of the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program. Also taking place at the Mississippi Museum of Art that day is a reception and musical performance by Marideth Sisco, followed by the closing night screening of *Winter's Bone* and Q&A with director Debra Granik.

A full schedule of screenings and events is available at www.sundance.org/filmforward and www.crossroadsfilmsociety.com.

The key marketing collaborator for the *Film Forward* program in Jackson and Piney Woods, Mississippi is South Arts.

A joint venture of Sundance Institute and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) in cooperation with USA federal cultural partners, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), *Film Forward* connects contemporary U.S. and international films and filmmakers with diverse global audiences and features documentary and narrative films. *Film Forward* underscores the importance of mutual understanding and respect for other cultures and traditions that is at the heart of cultural exchange.

U.S.A. Arts Organizations

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) bridges the interests of American federal agencies and the private sector, supports special projects that increase participation and excellence in the arts and humanities, and helps incorporate these disciplines into White House objectives. First Lady Michelle Obama is the Honorary Chairman of the PCAH.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education.

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) serves and strengthens our Republic by promoting excellence in the humanities and conveying the lessons of history to all Americans. The NEH is the nation's leading supporter of research education, preservation and public programs in the humanities.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is an independent federal grant making agency dedicated to creating strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The IMLS works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development.

Sundance Institute

Sundance Institute is a global nonprofit organization founded by Robert Redford in 1981. Through its programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, composers and playwrights, the Institute seeks to discover and support independent film and theatre artists from the United States and around the world, and to introduce audiences to their new work. The Institute promotes independent storytelling to inform, inspire, and unite diverse populations around the globe. Internationally recognized for its annual Sundance Film Festival, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as *Born into Brothels*, *Trouble the Water*, *Son of Babylon*, *Amreeka*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Spring Awakening*, *Light in the Piazza* and *Angels in America*. www.sundance.org

The Piney Woods School

The Piney Woods School, one of only four remaining historically African-American boarding schools in the nation, celebrated 100 years of delivering quality leadership education in 2009. Located on 2,000 acres of pristine woodland, the school offers a dynamic living/learning environment where every staff person becomes a mentor and every moment becomes an opportunity to educate. Each year, the school educates 200 students (grades 9 through 12) from 27 states and five foreign countries. And each year, 98 percent of the graduating seniors go on to some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the nation (last year with over \$2.8 million in scholarships). The Piney Woods School is the first high school in

the world with an AmeriCorps program with 35 seniors performing 450 hours of community service. This is part of a leadership initiative that changes the lives of students and allows young people to return to their home communities as agents for positive change. The collaboration with *Film Forward* will launch a new media arts focus for the school.

Crossroads Film Society

The Crossroads Film Society celebrates the art of filmmaking in all of its diversity and depth. The Crossroads Film Society will facilitate and promote a broader spectrum of film and video for the community, will present and honor films and videos related to Mississippi and the South, and will provide educational opportunities and facilitate general discussions for film lovers and aspiring film makers.

Mississippi Film Office

From initial contact to wrap, you can expect the assistance of our Mississippi Film Office: location scouting and research; pre-production help with casting, extras, crew, equipment; trouble-shooting during production and wrap; we will work with you every step of the way. We can offer a diversity of locations for your Mississippi film: the white sand beaches along the Gulf of Mexico, the panoramic agricultural expanse of the Delta along the Mississippi River, the rolling hills of the historic Natchez Trace, the grandeur of the many antebellum homes throughout the State. River communities, town squares and railroad cities reach from the early 1800's to the 1920's and '30's, while modern cities, industrial complexes and universities reach toward the future.

South Arts

South Arts (formerly the Southern Arts Federation), a nonprofit regional arts organization, was founded in 1975 to build on the South's unique heritage and enhance the public value of the arts. South Arts' work responds to the arts environment and cultural trends with a regional perspective. South Arts offers an annual portfolio of activities designed to address the role of the arts in impacting the issues important to our region, and to link the South with the nation and the world through the arts. The organization works in partnership with the state arts agencies of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. It is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, member states, foundations, businesses and individuals. www.southarts.org

Jackson State University

<http://www.jsums.edu/>

Mississippi Museum of Art

<http://www.msmuseumart.org/>

Film Forward Films

A Small Act / USA (Director: Jennifer Arnold) — A young Kenyan's life changes dramatically when his education is sponsored by a Swedish stranger. Years later, he founded his own scholarship program to replicate the kindness he once received.

Afghan Star / Afghanistan/UK (Director: Havana Marking) — After 30 years of war and Taliban rule, Pop Idol has come to television in Afghanistan: millions are watching and voting for their favorite singer. This film follows the dramatic stories of four contestants as they risk their lives to sing.

Amreeka / USA (Director and Screenwriter: Cherien Dabis) — When a divorced Palestinian woman and her teenage son move to rural Illinois, they find their new lives replete with challenges. Cast: Nisreen Faour, Melkar Muallem, Hiam Abbass, Yussuf Abu-Warda, Alia Shawkat, Joseph Ziegler.

Boy / New Zealand (Director and screenwriter: Taika Waititi) — When his father returns home after many years away, 11-year-old Boy and his little brother Rocky must reconcile reality with the fantasy dad they created in their imagination. Cast: Taika Waititi, James Rolleston, Te Aho Eketone.

Freedom Riders / USA (Director: Stanley Nelson) — The powerful, harrowing and ultimately inspiring story of six months in 1961 that changed America forever. Deliberately violating Jim Crow laws, the Freedom Riders' belief in non-violent activism was sorely tested as mob violence and bitter racism greeted them along the way.

La Mission / USA (Director and Screenwriter: Peter Bratt) — A traditional, Latino father in San Francisco's Mission District struggles to come to terms with his teenage son's homosexuality. Credited by Latino media as being both authentic and genuine to various aspects of American Hispanic cultures. Cast: Benjamin Bratt, Erika Alexander, Jeremy Ray Valdez, Talisa Soto Bratt, Jesse Borrego.

Last Train Home / Canada (Director: Lixin Fan) — Getting a train ticket in China proves a towering ordeal as a migrant worker family embarks on a journey, along with 200 million other peasants to reunite with their distant family.

Son of Babylon / Iraq (Director: Mohamed Al Daradji; Screenwriters: Mohamed Al-Daradji, Jennifer Norridge, Mithal Ghazi) — In the days after the fall of Saddam Hussein, a young Kurdish boy and his grandmother venture through Iraq on a quest to find their missing father/son. Cast: Yasser Talib, Shazda Hussein, Bashir Al-Majid.

Udaan / India (Director Vikramaditya Motwane; Screenwriter: Motwane) — Following his expulsion from boarding school, Rohan returns to the small industrial town of Jamshedpur. After 8 years away, he finds himself closeted with an authoritarian father and a younger half brother that he didn't even know existed. Udaan explores deep-rooted family dynamics and a triumph of the human spirit. Cast: Rajat Barmecha, Ronit Roy, Aayan Boradia, Ram Kapoor.

Winter's Bone / USA (Director: Debra Granik; Screenwriters: Debra Granik and Anne Rosellini) — An unflinching Ozark Mountain girl hacks through dangerous social terrain as she hunts down her missing father while trying to keep her family intact. Cast: Jennifer Lawrence, John Hawkes, Dale Dickey, Garret Dillahunt, Kevin Breznahan. Cast: Rajat Barmecha, Ronit Roy, Aayan Boradia, Ram Kapoor.

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