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Six ITVS-Funded Documentaries and Three *Independent Lens* Films Honored with Peabody Award Nominations

(San Francisco, CA, April 12, 2018) — ITVS is pleased to announce that six of its funded films have been nominated for 2018 Peabody Awards in the documentary category: *ABACUS: Small Enough to Jail*, *Deej*, *Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise*, *Motherland*, *Newtown*, and *TOWER*. In addition, *The Bad Kids*, which aired on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, which is presented by ITVS, garnered a nomination. Honoring the “most powerful, enlightening and invigorating stories in television, radio and digital media,” the Peabody Awards will announce the winners on April 17. The 77th Annual Peabody Awards ceremony will be held on Saturday, May 19 at Cipriani Wall Street in New York City.

"Our documentary filmmakers know what hard work is all about," noted Noland Walker, ITVS Vice President of Content. "ITVS works closely with our indie makers to ensure they feel supported throughout the life of their films and so we see firsthand how much it takes to produce these documentaries. It's an incredible honor to have helped them navigate through funding, production and broadcast; we also know that the Peabody Awards judging is a rigorous process and we thank the Board members for their acknowledgement. What an honor for ITVS and what an accomplishment for our filmmakers."

Lois Vossen, executive producer for *Independent Lens*, also praised the three nominated filmmakers from that series: "We're exceptionally proud to have funded *TOWER* and *Newtown*, from their earliest development phase through full production, and to have acquired *The Bad Kids*. *TOWER* and *Newtown* were funded a few months apart and I felt it would be powerful for audiences to see two different communities dealing with the aftermath of tragic school shootings — three and four years down the road in the case of *Newtown* and 50 years later in *TOWER*. Our third nominee, *The Bad Kids*, poignantly demonstrates the difference compassionate and determined educators can make in the lives of young people who have been deemed lost causes by the system. All three films and the filmmaking teams are so deserving of this honor."

More information on the nominated films follows:

ABACUS: Small Enough to Jail by Steve James (*Frontline*)

Nominated for an Academy Award, *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail*, directed by Steve James (*Hoop Dreams*, *The Interrupters*), tells the saga of the Sungs, a Chinese American family who own and operate Abacus Federal Savings in New York's Chinatown — the only U.S. bank prosecuted in relation to the 2008 financial crisis.



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1435 Folsom Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

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The Bad Kids by Lou Pepe and Keith Fulton (*Independent Lens*)

At a remote Mojave Desert high school, extraordinary educators believe that empathy and life skills, more than academics, give at-risk students command of their own futures. This coming-of-age story offers insight into how education can combat the crippling effects of poverty in the lives of these so-called "bad kids."

Deej by Robert Rooy (*America ReFramed*)

Abandoned by his birth parents and presumed incompetent, DJ Savarese ("Deej") found not only a loving family but also a life in words, which he types on a text-to-voice synthesizer. As he makes his way through high school and dreams of college, he confronts the terrors of his past, society's obstacles to inclusion, and the sometimes paralyzing beauty of his own senses.

Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise by Bob Hercules and Rita Coburn Whack (*American Masters*)

The full story of the eloquent poet, writer, and performer Maya Angelou, from the depths of her hardscrabble roots in the Depression-era South to her finding international fame as one of our greatest authors and social commentators.

Motherland by Sedika Mojadidi (*POV*)

Set in a busy maternity hospital in one of the poorest and most populous countries, *Motherland* traces the devastating toll on poor women as the Philippines struggles with reproductive health policy and the politics of Catholic ideology.

Newtown by Kim A. Snyder (*Independent Lens*)

On December 14, 2012, a disturbed young man committed a horrific mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, that took the lives of 20 elementary school children and six educators. Filmed over the course of nearly three years, *Newtown* uses deeply personal, never-before-heard testimonies to relate the aftermath of the deadliest mass shooting of schoolchildren in American history, documenting a traumatized community still reeling from the senseless tragedy, fractured by grief but driven toward a sense of purpose.

TOWER by Keith Maitland (*Independent Lens*)

On August 1, 1966, a sniper rode the elevator to the top floor of the University of Texas Tower and opened fire, holding the campus hostage for 96 minutes. When the gunshots were finally silenced, the toll included 16 dead, three dozen wounded, and a shaken nation left trying to understand. Combining archival footage with rotoscopic animation in a dynamic, never-before-seen way, *TOWER* reveals the action-packed untold stories of the witnesses, heroes, and survivors of America's first mass school shooting, when the worst in one man brought out the best in so many others.

About ITVS

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films and then airs them for free on PBS via our weekly series, *Independent Lens*, as well as on other PBS series and through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. For more information, visit itvs.org



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About Independent Lens

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: facebook.com/independentlens and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

CONTACT

Donna Hardwick, ITVS

415-356-8383, ext 241

donna.hardwick@itvs.org

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