



WIFV NEWS

February 2017 Members in the News

Edited by Flo Dwek

Featuring Katherine Chivers, Sagal Bagal, Nicole Gray, Christopher Neubauer, Celene Di Stasio, Umit Gulsen, Lisa Fierstein, Alisha Jama, Daniel Mills, Stefan LaToure, Phylis Geller, Judith Dwan Hallet, Jennifer Lawson, Call for Members in the News Articles, Call for Awards Info!

BERNING LOVE Premieres in Berlin



L to R: Chivers, Bagal, Myhre

BERNING LOVE, a production of The George Washington University Documentary Center Class of 2016, premiered at the 8th Annual Berlin Independent Film Festival on February 9th. Part of the opening night's schedule, BERNING LOVE screened to a full and enthusiastic audience. Three 2016 Documentary Center graduates, **Katherine Chivers**, Jennifer Myhre, and **Sujatha Bagal**, traveled to Berlin to represent the BERNING LOVE team, which included **Nicole Gray**, Jared Davis, Avani Mack, and **Christopher Neubauer**.

Inspired by the emergence of politically-focused dating websites such as BernieSingles.com, BERNING LOVE highlights the parallel ways in which people search for love in their political and personal lives. The film takes the viewer inside a movement that ultimately had a lasting impact on the general election by following Bernie Sanders activists in the months leading up to the DC primary on June 14, 2016. In this

WIFV Members Document Gatherings



Credit: Karen Ruckman

WIFV Members were busy Inaugural Weekend documenting the the political process in action. We even spied members in the livestreams and broadcasts behind cameras!

[A selection of their photos can be found on the WIFV Facebook page.](#)

Di Stasio Developing ShortKlips & More!

Producer and marketing expert **Celene Di Stasio** is the COO of **DC Visionaries**, an agency that focuses on marketing for high growth, early stage ventures. Recently, she expanded her entrepreneurial business to include a media tech startup, *ShortKlips*, aimed at putting veterans back to work-by editing video. The new venture is slated to hit a limited market in March. "The service is like Uber for social video editing," she explains, "helping to ease the burden on content creators, by providing a cost effective and quick turnaround editing service." She adds that "DC is just one of



increasingly divisive political landscape, BERNING LOVE offers a fresh perspective on last year's events and reminds us of a more hopeful side of political engagement.

BERNING LOVE will have its US premiere at the 20th Annual Green Mountain Film Festival. Follow along as they add additional screenings on the [website](#) or [Facebook](#). See trailer here!



Cinematographer Gulsen Dreams Big



Freelance filmmaker and cinematographer **Umit Gulsen's** film career began in 2001, when he got into film school in Istanbul. While studying, Umit worked as an assistant director on different productions, including TV series, short films and documentaries.

One of the shorts he worked on, BLUE, was supervised by Majid Majidi, the first Iranian Oscar-nominated director. In 2008, Umit found a job with a Washington, DC-based non-profit as a multimedia producer. In 2014, he began work as a freelance cinematographer, and in 2016 he earned his MA degree in Film and Video from American University. Umit has shot hundreds of projects over the years, both locally and internationally. His work for PCI took him to Tanzania and Guatemala, to capture the efforts of that NGO for the local people. Day to day, Umit also works on a number of corporate videos, meeting people from a wide range of interesting professions. "I

many cities that could benefit from putting a non typical labor force to work on its brand's marketing and video needs." Her DC Visionaries team is testing the service with small businesses and agencies to gather valuable feedback. They hope to implement the technology on a large, national scale by the end of the year. In another effort, Celene led production for a start-up called *ThreadRobe*, a company that has created a futuristic armoire that hangs and steams your laundry. Celene is also working with a financial start-up called *Flow* that is currently in Silicon Valley securing venture capital funding. "It's so exciting," Celene says, "to get texts at 2:00 am from entrepreneurs who have just overcome a challenge or raised funds. I feel like I'm on the ride with them." The unstoppable Celene has just opened a budget-friendly creative space, **Studio V** in Rockville, Maryland, where she hopes to host a variety of events, including those sponsored by WIFV. Want to join the ride? *Chat with Celene* at celene@dcviz.com or at 202-810-1949.

Meridian Hill Interns Produce Podcast

It's been a whirlwind since *The Messy Truth* - the web series co-produced by Meridian Hill Pictures and Magic Labs Media - aired just days before the November 2016 election. The three-part series has since garnered more than 4 million views on Facebook and **spurred lots of attention and conversation** surrounding the honest discussions depicted in the three episodes.



Credit: Lisa Fierstein and Michelle Aguilar

Interns and WIFV Members **Lisa Fierstein** and **Aisha Jama** recorded their thoughts as PA's on the shoot to offer a behind-the-scenes perspective of the day's events and to document their reflections on the experience. In their **podcast** they discuss the context and unique timing of the series, Van Jones's method of interviewing participants, and Meridian Hill Pictures' concerted effort to bring authenticity and complexity to such charged and often divisive and difficult discussions like the 2016 election. **All three**

never dreamed, when I was just starting out in Istanbul," he says, "that I would actually be shooting film after film in so many exciting places around the globe. Now, when I am in a new location, a new setting and a new time realm, I naturally connect to it. I feel the rhythm and let myself flow into it. Over time, through experience in the field, it's become an instinct to formulate my visual language for the soul of the project. Overall, I am after beauty that presents itself in different forms in our world and has a value beyond the film screen." A noble pursuit, indeed. *To learn more, visit Umit's website at www.umatgulsen.net or contact him at cabikafilm@gmail.com.*

BREAKING FREE Now on Festival Circuit

Daniel Mills is pleased to announce that his short documentary, **BREAKING FREE - A SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY**, has been accepted into seven festivals around the country.



It screened at the Rosebud Film Festival on January 28 in Arlington, Virginia, and will also be shown at the Garden State Film Festival and the Women in Media - Newark Festival in Spring, 2017. The film tells the compelling story of a survivor of sex trafficking and how lawyers at Washington, DC's Amara Legal Center were able to expunge her arrest record. She went on to earn a high-level security clearance and currently works for the federal government. As for Dan, he is currently enrolled in GW's Institute for Documentary Filmmaking and says he is thrilled to be a student again. For more information, contact Dan at 571-213-3401 or email him at Daniel@millsoffice.net.

episodes of the Messy Truth can be watched here.

Thanks for tuning in and keep the discussion going by using **#docfilmsmatter** on your social media platforms.

LaToure Completes Sound

Editing/Design



Award-winning editor **Stefan LaToure** recently wrapped sound editing and sound design on two SAG indie shorts out of New York. The first short, **MARS & VENUS: OPERATION EQUILIBRIUM**, is a sci-fi

film that recently screened in New York to a standing ovation. It's one of several projects from the team of Katie Mack and Okema Moore at Boxed Out Productions, and will make the rounds at festivals this year. Stefan is fond of the film's tagline: "When the balance of who and what society is becomes lost, it evolves into the beginning of the end. With the future at stake...can the present learn to appreciate itself enough to save humanity?" The second short, **THE PRELUDE**, tells the story of a man battling with fatherhood who tries not to make the same mistakes his father made. It was written and directed by Shauntay Cherry. For the past two years, Stefan has also served as Producer, Editor and Digital Asset Manager for an early childhood education company in Bethesda, MD. To learn more, contact Stefan at mrlatoure@gmail.com or at 202-251-5199. **His new website will be launched in mid March.**



Salute to our Foremothers - The WIFV Q&A

For the next several months, we will be featuring interviews with the women who founded and nurtured Women in Film & Video from the beginning to today! It is quite astounding for a professional development nonprofit to celebrate a 40th Anniversary (ours will begin in 2019) and even more astounding to have so many of its founders and leaders

remaining actively involved with the organization. We are honored by their support and nourished by their expertise and enthusiasm. Thanks to **Flo Dwek** for this great idea!

Phylis Geller

How long have you been a WIFV member, and why did you join WIFV, all those years ago?

I began working in New York in the 1970's, at National Educational Television, the precursor to PBS. I worked on THEATER IN AMERICA, where we adapted and shot plays for television. This was at the height of "Women's Lib," and I was all in. I joined, I demonstrated, I helped organize the women at work. When I moved to Los Angeles, I heard about Women In Film (WIF), which was founded there in 1973. I needed new women friends and an outlet for issues I cared about; so, again, I joined. I became President in 1983, giving me the privilege of hosting the 10th anniversary Crystal Awards, which we gave to Bette Davis, Ruth Gordon and Margaret Booth.



WIF was vital and fun, and it brought me a world of amazing friends who are still in my life today.

What were you doing then, and what are you doing today?

By that time I was at KCET/Hollywood, the PBS station and production center. At first I was Director of Drama, then later became Sr. VP of National Productions. I oversaw everything we produced for PBS, including documentaries, drama, performance and children's programs. WIF helped connect me to the entertainment industry at large and I learned a great deal that enhanced my own work.

I came to Washington in 1995 to be Sr. VP of Cultural Programming and New Media at WETA. After several years, I left to start my own company. I've written, produced and directed many documentaries, for PBS and for cable. After so many gratifying years overseeing other producers, it has been great fun to dig in and make things on my own.

What are some of the most beneficial things about your membership with WIFV?

When you join this organization, you join a family. When I moved to Washington, I was immediately embraced by WIFV, as a sister from the other coast. I was put on the Advisory Board and deposited into another network of brilliant, accomplished women. Once again, WIFV eased my transition from city to city; later, friends helped me set up shop as an independent producer. I am always impressed by the array of programs offered to members. What a rich opportunity to learn, and to build relationships that are warm, supportive, and inspiring

What advice do you have for emerging filmmakers?

Success is driven by smarts, skills and hard work...but mostly, success is driven by passion. There are obstacles everywhere...from fundraising to production to distribution. I think this generation is fortunate that technology lets you be more independent; if you can shoot and edit yourself, your budgets can be kept lower. Still, the business is split and sprawling and morphing by the minute. There are more distribution mechanisms than ever, which is great, but it is also more complicated. The competition is tough. It's the person with the 'fire in the belly' who will see it through...because she has to.

Anything else you would care to share?

In 1984, I joined the board of the WIF Foundation in Los Angeles, which gives grants to help advance women's careers. Directing was the hardest area to break into (surprise, surprise!). It was a vicious circle, of course; you couldn't get anything made, but no one would hire you unless you had something to show. To help women complete their projects, I started the Film Finishing Fund there as well, which I am thrilled to say is still going strong, 30 years later!!!

Judith Dwan Hallet



How long have you been a WIFV member, and why did you join WIFV, all those years ago?

I believe I have been a member of WIFV since 1987. I had just moved to Washington, DC from Utah, where I had been a television producer/reporter for KUTV, the local NBC affiliate in Salt Lake City. When I heard about WIFV, I thought this would be a great way to meet other women filmmakers in the area. It was one of the best decisions I ever made. The women I met through WIFV continue today to be some of my best and supportive friends.

What were you doing then, and what are you doing today?

During my first year in Washington, I continued working for KUTV, this time for their Washington, DC News Bureau. While producing a film on land ownership among the Western Shoshones, an ad appeared in Broadcast Magazine looking for a Senior Producer for a television news magazine show home based in Washington. Without knowing what organization had placed the ad, I applied for the position. Totally surprised, National Geographic Television called a week later. They wanted to hire a Senior Producer for their weekly television show, EXPLORER.

Having just joined WIFV, I learned from its founding member, Ginny Durrin, that another member, Betty Kotcher, worked at National Geographic. Networking at its best, Betty immediately sent me several EXPLORER VHF tapes to review and also introduced me to someone already working for the series. Well prepared with information about EXPLORER, I met with the Executive Producers. Based solely on my résumé and my body of work, National Geographic hired me soon after our meeting. I could scarcely believe my good fortune.

At National Geographic EXPLORER I supervised over 60 documentaries, in addition to producing and directing four films. After nearly five years, I left National Geographic to form my own company, Judith Dwan Hallet Productions. I had learned a lot and it had been a good experience, but it was time to move on. Moving up the corporate ladder at National Geographic had little appeal for me. I wanted to be a full time independent documentary filmmaker, and that is what I did for the next 25 years. It has been an amazing career. I have produced and directed more than 20 documentary films in 17 countries around the world on subjects as diverse as an obscure tribe living in tree houses in the rainforest of Papua on the Island of New Guinea, to gauchos in Argentina; biographies on Jane Goodall and Pope John Paul II (made with my friend and colleague, Catherine Wyler); to scientific films like the biological aspects of aging to building the Aswan and Hoover Dams. Currently, I have finished a book documenting my life as a documentary filmmaker. It is now under consideration by two presses for publication. Somewhat related, although in a completely different field, I am also writing a cookbook on Tunisian cuisine.

What are some of the most beneficial things about your membership with WIFV?

Friendship, friendship, friendship. Add to this networking, workshops, lectures and mentorship. I cannot think of a more nurturing and information based organization than WIFV. Led by Executive Director, Melissa Houghton, it remains an exceptional organization. She is an inspiring leader and a wonderful, loyal friend.

What advice do you have for emerging filmmakers?

It is important to always be prepared, disciplined and well researched before beginning any project. It is also important to believe in the message you are transmitting with your work -- be it film, video, online digital streaming or the latest creative format. It is also critical to realize that there will always be disappointments and failures but you should never give up. Get back on your horse and learn from your mistakes! But in the end, filmmaking requires passion. For me, personally, I have always tried to make a tiny difference in the world with my films. If people can understand different cultures, different ideas, different approaches to life, then, maybe, our world can become more understandable, more peaceful and less warlike.

Anything else you would like to share?

A few months after my documentary, THE AMERICAN BUFFALO, SPIRIT OF A NATION, aired on PBS, my two protagonists, Fred Du Bray and Rocke Afraid of Hawk, from the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota, flew to Washington. They had arranged to show the film to the US Congress Appropriations Committee, headed by Senator Tom Daschle from South Dakota. When the senator finished viewing it, he turned to Fred and Rocke and told them that it was a terrific film. Reintroducing buffalo to the nation's reservations, he felt, was "a win-win situation." He said that he would appropriate \$1 million to their buffalo program. Thanks in a small way to the documentary, we had helped the Indians' dream come true: to bring back the buffalo to their reservations. And I was so gratified that it was also my dream come true -- to make a difference.

I would also like to add that one of the great honors of my life was the evening WIFV awarded me their The Women of Vision Award for Creative Excellence for my body of work. Thank you, WIFV. You always make me smile.

Jennifer Lawson

How long have you been a WIFV member, and why did you join WIFV, all those years ago?

Shortly after I moved to the Washington area in the early 1980s I was impressed with the encouragement, friendship, camaraderie and support that women media makers at all levels were offering each other through WIFV. I have been a WIFV member for well over 25 years. I joined because I wanted to see more women advance in media, and WIFV offered a great forum for tackling such a broad range of issues--from the technical to policy. WIFV galas offered a rare opportunity to celebrate some of the many unsung women who have done incredible work.



What were you doing then, and what are you doing today?

Initially, I came to Washington to work as a media funder at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and served for over 20 years as an executive at CPB and PBS combined. I also spent nine years as a producer and several more as manager of a local public TV station, WHUT. In all of my work, I am proud of the increased diversity we brought to both sides of the screen through the support of women media makers and people of color. Now, I have returned once again to the production side of the business and I am developing my own concepts.

What are some of the most beneficial things about your membership with WIFV?

I revel in knowing that WIFV is there for me and other women in media now and for the future, whether it's the support given through job fairs, which I valued so much when I was an employer; or workshops, forums, and events that cover topics of interest to so many of us as either professionals or emerging professionals.

What advice do you have for emerging filmmakers?

Become an integral part of WIFV as an active participant in events and learn from all of the terrific people around you. It's a fun way to network. Never stop learning, pursue your passion and enjoy the collaborative nature of our work. Take inspiration from the fact that there are so many important stories to be told and never forget that one can make a difference through this work.

Anything else you would care to share?

I am especially moved by the fact that WIFV started in Ginny Durrin's living room. It is important, particularly during turbulent times, to remind ourselves that a handful of people with a good idea, commitment and determination can start something that can have ongoing impact and be valuable to so many for decades.

Call for WIFV Members in the News Articles

What's the best way to brag about your accomplishments? With a Members in the News article, of course. Not only can you include a photo and your website, it is archived at wifv.org and adds to your SEO. Submit your paragraph, jpg photo, and any links to director@wifv.org by the 5th of the month.

Call for Award Info

If you have won an award, screened at a film festival, or received a major grant, please let me know so we can share your success. Send the info to director@wifv.org

Thank you!

WIFV is honored to be recognized again as a Top-Rated organization by Great Nonprofits. Less than 1% of eligible nonprofits received this distinction. Because of the reviews WIFV has received, we've been a Top-Rated nonprofit since 2012. **Your review makes a difference!**



We value your your reviews throughout the year. Please tell Great Nonprofits about an experience you've had at a WIFV program, an interaction you've had with a speaker or fellow member, or just what WIFV means to you. [Click here to go straight to the WIFV page on their site.](#)



WIFV is grateful for the annual support of these [companies](#) and our [corporate members](#).

Just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in Women in Film & Video. Don't forget to add director@wifv.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

About WIFV

WIFV supports women in the industry by promoting equal opportunities, encouraging professional development, serving as an information network, and educating the public about women's creative and technical achievements.



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