

# VOICE MAGAZINE



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Photo courtesy of Museum of Art

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Photo courtesy of Diego Martinez

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*Jeffrey Wright*

star of *American Fiction* will receive SBIFF's Montecito Award — see page 5

Santa Barbara INTERNATIONAL **Film** FESTIVAL

*Jeffrey Wright*

star of *American Fiction* will receive SBIFF's Montecito Award at 8pm Thursday, February 15th in an Tribute moderated by SBIFF Executive Director Roger Durling

Find SBIFF coverage on pages 5-12, 14, 17-18, 20

VOICE Magazine has sponsored SBIFF for 21 years

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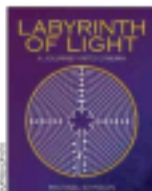
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**SANTA BARBARA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

## Three Films to See Including *First We Bombed New Mexico*



PHOTO: JAVIER

By Robert A. Adams / Special to VOICE

**T**HE A PORTRAIT OF THE MUJI-GENERATIONAL PEOPLE affected by the Trinity atomic bomb tests in the mountainous desert valleys south of Albuquerque. *First We Bombed New Mexico* is a feature length documentary looking at the flip side of Christopher Nolan's award-winning film *Oppenheimer*. The film offers a missing look at this overlooked and ignored tragedy, past and present.

Filmmaker Lois Lipman shows a little of the history of the tests in the 1940s but mainly focuses on the local communities. Her film uncovers the human faces impacted by the early nuclear arms race, revealing understandings of injustice and inherent racism. A subjective tale of toxic consequences, the rural New Mexico communities still have contact with radioactive plutonium particles and their plight of illnesses have been ignored by society at large, inclusive of the U.S. Government, who unleashed the atomic fire. *First We Bombed New Mexico* premiered at the Santa Fe International Film Festival in 2023 where it won two documentary awards and has since been chosen for the Austin and Palm Springs festivals, among others. The subject matter is both timely and important.

In an interview with VOICE, the Lipman recalled, "I spent so many years doing original research on this story to find extraordinary characters (who don't duplicate each other). For example, I wanted eye witnesses to the bomb — no one had ever at that time been interviewed. But I attended all the downwinders events for many years. I even traveled with them to DC... I asked them if we could film the women going up the mountains on the Good Friday... I wanted to show their unique and beautiful traditions."

It was important to develop relationships with those impacted. Lipman related, "Tina Cordova, (one of the subjects) asked me to make this film eight years ago because she couldn't get the needed attention of the press or DC. She believed a film would amplify her voice. So, Tina let the downwinders know that this film would be important and would help them, so everyone generously opened their doors and hearts and told me their stories, and trust was developed. In all, we filmed 500 hours of footage and we re-edited our film over 2-1/2 years. Then Tina told me that she got a call from Trevor and Kat who were living in (Santa Barbara) California. Trevor wanted to return to New Mexico to reconnect with his former community and become part of the larger campaign. So I called Trevor and he invited me to film him and Kat getting his medical treatment. It just so happened that Kat and Trevor were very exceptional people who let us film their difficult journey."

Screenings of this compelling saga will be held at the Metro 4 on Friday, February 9th at 3:20pm and the next day, Saturday February 10th at 11am. Audiences might want to show up and meet Lipman and some of those interviewed in the film. *Oppenheimer* will be screened on Friday Feb 9th at 2pm at the Arlington with lead actor Cillian Murphy just before the Friday first showing, which would make for an interesting day of watching films that are critical of the unleashing of the Atomic Bombs testing phases.

*Forget Me Again*, a 19-minute short film, is a fictional story produced in conjunction with the Film and Media Studies department at UCSB with a large crew of students. The story looks at the effects of a pharmaceutical drug that allows for controlled memory loss. It looks like a promising psychological story and very well may be worth seeking out. The filmmaker is Noah Freeman Hecht, and two screenings will be held at the Metro 4

on Wednesday, February 14th and Thursday, February 15th in a shorts program. The film already won UCSB Cinema Award for Best Short Film of the Year.

*Regressus*, an intriguing and moody relationship drama from Canada, is screening and is the debut feature from writer-director Meredith Hanna-Brown. Set in the recent past, a Japanese Canadian wife and mother has to deal with a recent parental death. She decides to bring her family to a retreat for self-development which tests the family relationships including the husband-wife dynamic and their two daughters.

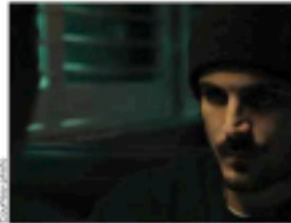


PHOTO: ANA AGON

A whispering psychological exploration shot in an enigmatic coastal location, the narrative lets us peer into lurking emotions that have been hidden, as the thematic thrust emerges focusing on self-awareness and racial identity. The strong ensemble cast features subtle performances from Ally Maki (*The Big Door Prize*), Luke Roberts (*Game of Thrones*), Chris Pang (*Crazy Rich Asians*), and Remy Marthaler (*The Island Between Tides*). The film won the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival's FIPRESCI award and found a distributor for screenings later this year. The film will screen on February 12th and 13th at the Metro 4 and will feature a Q&A with the director, the lead actress, and the cinematographer.



PHOTO: ANA AGON

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