



CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES

CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES ANNOUNCES FIVE FILMMAKERS TO RECEIVE THEIR INAUGURAL BREAKTHROUGH FILMMAKER AWARD

NEW YORK, NY (January 19, 2016) Chicken & Egg Pictures, a leader in supporting women non-fiction filmmakers, announced today the recipients of their inaugural **Breakthrough Filmmaker Awards**. The five chosen filmmakers are Kristi Jacobson (*A Place at the Table*) Julia Reichert (*The Last Truck*), Yoruba Richen (*The New Black*), Elaine McMillion Sheldon (*Hollow*), and Michèle Stephenson (*American Promise*). This award consists of a \$50,000 unrestricted grant and a year-long mentorship program tailored to each filmmaker's individual goals.

The Chicken & Egg Pictures Breakthrough Filmmaker Award responds to the reality that only a few women non-fiction directors in the U.S. are able to work full-time as independent storytellers. The program recognizes and elevates five mid-career women directors with unique voices who are poised to reach new heights and to continue to be strong filmmaker-advocates for urgent issues.

"Chicken & Egg Pictures continues to make bold investments in both women artists and gender equality to ensure that a greater diversity of voices are acknowledged for their participation in the storytelling that drives change," said Jenni Wolfson, Executive Director of Chicken & Egg Pictures. "Our hope with this new award is to provide support and a platform for these artists to continue showcasing and elevating critical social justice, environmental, and human rights issues and stories while working to increase their visibility and ensure they receive the recognition they deserve."

Recipients of the Chicken & Egg Pictures Breakthrough Filmmaker Award were chosen through a nation-wide confidential nomination process.

For additional information on Chicken & Egg Pictures and the Breakthrough Filmmaker Award please visit: <http://chickeneggpics.org/>.

2016 BREAKTHROUGH FILMMAKER AWARD RECIPIENTS

Kristi Jacobson

Kristi Jacobson is a NY-based filmmaker whose films capture nuanced, intimate, and provocative portrayals of individuals and communities. Her most recent film, *A Place at the Table* (Participant Media/Magnolia Pictures), called “one of the most important...and gripping non-fiction films to debut in some time” by Indiewire, premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival before its theatrical release in over 35 U.S. cities. Previous films include the critically acclaimed *Toots*, winner of the National Board of Review’s 2007 Top Documentary Award, and *American Standoff* (HBO), produced by two-time Oscar winner Barbara Kopple. Jacobson is a member of the Director’s Guild of America, NYWIFT, and a two-time Sundance Creative Producing Fellow. She is a recipient of grants from Tribeca Film Institute, Sundance Institute DFP, Chicken & Egg Pictures, and many others. She is currently working on an upcoming HBO documentary that provides an immersive and unprecedented look inside the world of solitary confinement in the U.S.

Julia Reichert

Julia Reichert is a three-time Academy Award nominee for her documentary work. She lives in Ohio, and has chosen to focus on class, gender, and race in the lives of Americans. Julia’s first film, *Growing Up Female*, was the first feature documentary of the modern Women’s Movement. It was recently selected for the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress. Her films *Union Maids* and *Seeing Red* were nominated for Academy Awards for Best Feature Documentary, as was *The Last Truck*, a short (co-directed with Steven Bognar) which premiered at the Telluride Film Festival and on HBO. Her film *A Lion in the House* (an ITVS co-production, made with Bognar) premiered at Sundance, screened nationally on PBS, and won the Primetime Emmy for Exceptional Merit in Nonfiction Filmmaking. She co-wrote and directed the feature film *Emma and Elvis*. Julia is co-founder of New Day Films, the independent film distribution co-op. She is author of “Doing It Yourself,” the first book on self-distribution in independent film, and was an Advisory Board member of IFP. Reichert is currently directing a film about the 9 to 5 movement, telling the stories of the millions of low wage, invisible women who populated the clerical pool, served coffee, and suffered sexual harassment before it was named. In the 1970’s they gathered their courage and rose up against their bosses, large corporations, and institutions. She’s also begun filming a verite follow-up to *The Last Truck*, chronicling the arrival of a new plant in her economically devastated Midwestern city.

Yoruba Richen

Yoruba Richen is a documentary filmmaker whose work explores issues of race, space, and power. She has directed films in the U.S. and abroad, including *The New Black* and *Promised Land*. *The New Black* won Audience Awards at AFI Docs, Philly Q Fest, and Frameline LGBT Film Festival. The film also won best documentary at the Urbanworld Film Festival and was nominated for an NAACP Image Award and a GLAAD Media Award. *The New Black* opened theatrically at New York’s Film Forum

and aired on PBS's Independent Lens. Yoruba has received numerous grants including from Sundance Documentary Fund, Chicken & Egg Pictures, and the Ford Foundation. She won the Creative Promise Award at Tribeca All Access and was also a Sundance Producers Fellow. Yoruba is a featured TED Speaker and a Guggenheim Fellow. She is director of the documentary program at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism. Yoruba is currently working on *How It Feels To Be Free*, a two-part documentary chronicling how black entertainers like Lena Horne and Cicely Tyson navigated the industry and took control of their own images, all while fighting for civil rights through their art and actions.

Elaine McMillion Sheldon

Elaine McMillion Sheldon is a documentary filmmaker and media artist who explores themes of identity, roots, and change. She's the director of *Hollow*, the Emmy-nominated and Peabody-winning interactive documentary that explores life in the Appalachian coalfields. She's also the co-producer of *The Lower 9*, a feature-length documentary about The Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Sheldon's film and interactive work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, from the New York Film Festival to IDFA. Sheldon was a 2013 Future of Storytelling Fellow, and named one of the "25 New Faces of Independent Film" in 2013 by Filmmaker Magazine and one of "50 People Changing The South" in 2015 by Southern Living Magazine. She works across platforms and mediums—film, photo, audio, interactive media—to create storytelling experiences. Sheldon is currently working on several projects that employ the storytelling skills she has developed for multiple mediums, including short and feature filmmaking, longform and interactive journalism, participatory media, virtual reality, and audio storytelling. Two of the film-based projects include a feature-length documentary about home, identity, and roots of Latino families living in Appalachia, and a short-film collaboration with the *New York Times* Op-Docs centered on the election year in rural America.

Michèle Stephenson

Michèle Stephenson pulls from her Caribbean roots and international experience as a human rights attorney to tell compelling personal stories that resonate beyond the margins. Her work has appeared on a variety of broadcast and web platforms, including PBS, Showtime, and MTV. Her most recent film, *American Promise*, was nominated for three Emmys including Best Documentary. The film won the Jury Prize at Sundance and was selected for the New York Film Festival's Main Slate. Stephenson's community engagement work has won numerous awards including the BRITDOC Puma Impact Award and a Revere Award nomination from the American Publishers Association. Other films directed by Stephenson include *Slaying Goliath* and *Faces of Change*. Her recent book, "Promises Kept," written with co-authors Joe Brewster and Hilary Beard, won an NAACP Image Award. Stephenson is currently working on *Hispaniola*, a documentary chronicling the lives of families

affected by the TC-186 Dominican Republic Supreme Court ruling that strips citizenship from individuals of Haitian descent who were born in the country. She's also part of the filmmaking team behind *Conversations On Race*, a New York Times Op-Docs series of short films that uses powerful personal narratives to elevate shared experiences of race and equality.

ABOUT CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES

Chicken & Egg Pictures supports women non-fiction filmmakers whose artful and innovative storytelling catalyzes social change. Chicken & Egg Pictures envisions a world in which women non-fiction filmmakers, representing a range of diverse experiences and backgrounds, are fully supported to realize their artistic goals and vision, build sustainable careers, and achieve parity in all areas of the film industry.

Chicken & Egg Pictures was founded in 2005 by Julie Parker Benello, Wendy Ettinger, and Judith Helfand. Since inception, Chicken & Egg Pictures has awarded over \$4 million in grants and more than 5,200 hours of mentorship to over 200 films. Films supported by Chicken & Egg Pictures have won numerous awards, including Oscars and Emmys; they have shifted deeply entrenched attitudes; and they have changed policy on a variety of critical human rights and social justice issues. For additional information please visit: <http://chickeneggpics.org/>.

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