



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Jewish Film Institute Postpones 40th Anniversary San Francisco Jewish Film Festival**

**[San Francisco, CA, April 14, 2020]** The Jewish Film Institute has made the difficult decision of postponing the 40th Anniversary San Francisco Jewish Film Festival in light of current projections for social distancing in the Bay Area and beyond. Jewish Film Institute Executive Director Lexi Leban has announced that in order to ensure the health and safety of the community, the summer festival will be postponed for the first time in its history. The 40th anniversary of the world's first and largest Jewish Film Festival was slated for July 16 - August 2nd, with the first 10 days taking place at San Francisco's historic Castro Theatre.

"This was an emotional decision for all of us, but clearly the only decision to make. The Festival is marking our 40th anniversary this year and we wanted to celebrate together. There are so many unknowns in this situation and we are in uncharted waters, but our priority is the health and safety of the community until we come together again. We have reserved alternate dates for a Fall Festival in November should we be able to resume live programming at that time," Leban explained. "JFI has always been more than a summer Festival. We are taking this opportunity while sheltering in place to highlight our robust online programming and continue to support filmmakers working with Jewish themes through our filmmaker in residence program and inaugural Completion Funding Program."

JFI is working to bring audiences meaningful programs at home through the newly launched Cinegogue Sessions featuring films from JFI On Demand, Online Shorts, and virtual Q&A's with filmmakers. JFI has also moved forward to announce and accept applicants for both the 2020 Youth Jury Award - specially designed for teen jurors and student filmmakers - as well as a new Completion Funding Program, the only program of its kind providing financial support to

filmmakers working with Jewish themes. There will still be a juried prize for best short documentary and the winner will be eligible for the Oscars. According to Program Director, Jay Rosenblatt, “filmmakers are still able to produce the incredible work that we look forward to every year and we want to make sure that we continue to support the pipeline of production so the films will be here when we are back.”

Leban echoed the sentiments of the board and staff adding, “this time has made crystal clear to us that community, art, and film have the ability to give us hope and to highlight the similarities of our global experience as human beings. It is comforting to know that we are all in this together and can use this time wisely so that we can bring about positive change when we emerge from our homes into the iconic Castro theater once again. We are not going anywhere. We plan to be around for the next 40 years!”

As JFI continues to work with leadership across cultural, artistic, government, and healthcare industries on developing an updated timeline, please visit [www.jfi.org](http://www.jfi.org) or sign up for the JFI Newsletter for the most recent and up to date announcements.

### **About the Jewish Film Institute**

The Jewish Film Institute (JFI) is the premier curatorial voice for Jewish film and media and a leading arts and culture organization in the Bay Area. JFI catalyzes and inspires communities in San Francisco and around the world to expand their understanding of Jewish life and culture through film, media, and dialogue. JFI each year produces their signature summer Festival, the **San Francisco Jewish Film Festival**, in four Bay Area counties, the largest Jewish cultural event in Northern California and the first and largest festival of its kind worldwide. The annual festival provides a suite of awards, some with cash prizes, including: the Freedom of Expression Award (recent recipients include Norman Lear, Lee Grant, Kirk Douglas and documentary filmmakers Joe Berlinger and Liz Garbus); Audience Award for Best Narrative and Best Documentary; the Film Movement Award for Best Narrative Short; a juried award for Best Documentary Short (the winner is eligible for the Oscars); and the SF Film Critics Award for best international fiction feature.

Additionally, JFI provides a number of Filmmaker Services to help provide support for emerging and established filmmakers working with Jewish themes and create a continuum of support for filmmakers at various stages in their careers. This support is provided through JFI’s Filmmaker Residency Program which since 2012 as provided office space and support for independent producers (current filmmakers in residence include documentary filmmakers: Nora Mariana, Theo Rigby, Eva Ilona Brzeski, Yoav Potash, and Charene Zalis), and the Jerusalem Film

Workshop a program in which JFI sends two emerging documentary student filmmakers to a 6-week documentary film workshop in Jerusalem to make films that will screen at the Jerusalem International Film Festival.

Finally, JFI provides a number of online programs including: the JFI Film Archive, the largest database of Jewish cinema online today, with almost 40 years of curatorial history and more than 1800 films to investigate, this archive is the largest online resource for Jewish film and media in the World; through JFI On Demand, more than 350 films of its greatest hits can be accessed anytime, anywhere; and the Monthly Online Shorts, in which every month JFI releases films for free to a global audience of 2.3 million since 2009.

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