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THE FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CULTURE ANNOUNCES 2010 RECIPIENTS OF THE LYNN AND JULES KROLL FUND FOR JEWISH DOCUMENTARY FILM

NEW YORK – December 15, 2010 –The Foundation for Jewish Culture granted \$140,000 to five exemplary documentaries, ensuring their delivery to film festivals, television, and other distribution outlets. The grants, which range between \$20,000 and \$35,000 each, will enable filmmakers to pay license fees for archival footage, complete additional shooting, and reach a wider audience through outreach and engagement strategies.

This year's grantees of the Foundation's Lynn and Jules Kroll Fund for Jewish Documentary Film include: *Joann Sfar Draws From Memory* (US/France, directed and produced by Sam Ball), a portrait of one of France's most celebrated graphic novelists; *Regarding Susan Sontag* (US, directed and produced by Nancy Kates), a spotlight on the life and work of the late American writer and icon; *The Law in These Parts* (Israel/US, directed by Ra'anan Alexandrowicz and produced by Laura Poitras), an examination of Israeli military tribunals in the Occupied Territories; *Numbered* (Israel, directed by Dana Doron and Uriel Sinai), a meditation on the relationship between Holocaust survivors and their tattoos; and *The Hangman* (Israel, directed by Netalie Braun and Avigail Sperber), a chronicle of Adolf Eichmann's executioner.

This was another record year, with nearly 100 grant applications from around the world. Selected by a rigorous panel of scholars, critics, filmmakers, and curators, the 2010 grantees reflect the global diversity of contemporary Jewish culture. Elise Bernhardt, President and CEO of the Foundation for Jewish Culture, says: "This years films are notable for the extraordinary characters they follow and the passionate way in which they live their lives and follow their internal sense of what is right and true."

Since 1996, the **Lynn and Jules Kroll Fund for Jewish Documentary Film** has supported the completion of original documentaries that explore the Jewish experience in all its complexity. The fund was created with a lead grant from Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation and sustained over 10 years with major support from the Charles H. Revson Foundation. The priority of the fund is to support projects that address significant subjects; offer fresh, challenging perspectives; engage audiences across cultural lines; and expand the

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understanding of Jewish experiences.

Foundation for Jewish Culture Board Member Lynn Kroll states: “The annual funding of works-in-progress is always an exciting risk. Jules and I were impressed with this year’s submissions and grantees. We are confident that the excellent and diverse panel of judges has made sound, informed recommendations. I am particularly pleased that our challenge grant was matched by Ellen and Steve Susman, the Simms/Mann Family Foundation, Linda Platt, and others who share our belief in the power of documentary film to stimulate productive dialogue and debate.”

In the past fourteen years, Documentary films supported by the Kroll Fund have received Academy Award® nominations, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Award Nominees, George Foster Peabody Awards, and prizes at festivals such as Berlin International Film Festival, Silverdocs, Sundance Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival. Past grantees include *Waltz with Bashir*, *Budrus*, *Blessed is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh*, *Crime After Crime*, *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe*, *Off and Running: An American Coming of Age Story*, *The Rape of Europa*, among others.

2010 Recipients of the Lynn and Jules Kroll Fund for Jewish Documentary Film:

The Law in These Parts, directed by Ra’anán Alexandrowicz and produced by Liran Atzmor and Laura Poitras

The Law in These Parts chronicles Israel's 43-year military legal system in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The story unfolds through interviews with the architects of this legal system juxtaposed with historical footage showing the enactment of these laws upon the Palestinian population. Acclaimed Israeli director Ra’anán Alexandrowicz holds a mirror up to his society using interviews with judges who presided over military courts since 1967. The film is produced by Academy Award® nominee Laura Poitras (*My Country, My Country* and *The Oath*).

Ra'anán Alexandrowicz has carved name recognition for himself through his role as writer and director of award-winning films such as the full-length narrative feature *James' Journey to Jerusalem*, and the acclaimed documentaries *The Inner Tour* and *Martin* which both premiered at *New Directors/New Films*, presented by The Film Society of Lincoln Center and The Museum of Modern Art. His films have also screened at Berlin International Film Festival, International Documentary Association Amsterdam, Sundance Film Festival, and received awards at the Jerusalem

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International Film Festival, and the Tel Aviv International Documentary Film Festival.

Joann Sfar Draws From Memory, directed and produced by Sam Ball

Joann Sfar Draws from Memory follows one of the most celebrated graphic novelists of our time on a whimsical journey through the Algerian-Jewish heritage that inspires his work. Sfar is the award-winning author of *The Rabbi's Cat*, *Klezmer: Tales of the Wild East*, and *Little Vampire*. We discover an obsessive chronicler of the past who is driven, at the same time, by a powerful curiosity about what will happen next. That curiosity, at the center of his creative process, yields a delightfully rambling brand of storytelling, blending memoir and philosophical musings with outrageous inventiveness, both on and off the page.

Sam Ball's documentaries have been exhibited by many of America's most prestigious venues for independent film, ranging from the Sundance Film Festival to The Museum of Modern Art. Ball has made several films about art, including *Pleasures of Urban Decay* (recipient of a 1998 grant from the Foundation for Jewish Culture's Kroll Film Fund) and *Balancing Acts: a Jewish Theatre in the Soviet Union*, commissioned by The Jewish Museum, New York for the travelling exhibition *Chagall and the Artists of the Russian Jewish Theater, 1919-1949*. Ball is currently directing *Sing Another Verse*, a television documentary about the life and work of Yiddish cultural activists Yosl and Chana Mlotek. He is also creating video installations for *Being Jewish 2.0*, a project commissioned by San Francisco's Contemporary Jewish Museum. Most recently, Ball created films in collaboration with playwright Corey Fisher and theatre director Aaron Davidman for a mixed media performance called *In the Maze of Our Own Lives*, exploring the legacy of the Depression-Era Group Theatre.

Regarding Susan Sontag, directed and produced by Nancy D. Kates

Regarding Susan Sontag examines the life and work of the late critic, novelist, film director, activist, and star. Using extraordinary archival images and riveting interviews with Sontag's friends and colleagues, the *film* demonstrates why her thoughts and writing about topics such as illness, photography, war, terrorism, and torture remain vitally important in the new world of the 21st century. Director Nancy Kates provides numerous lenses to view Sontag's life and work, and unexpectedly portrays Jewishness as one of her key identities. Footage includes Sontag's recollection of seeing Holocaust imagery as a child and *Promised Lands* (1974), her documentary film concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. The film's website is <http://sontagfilm.org/>

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Nancy D. Kates is a filmmaker and writer based in Berkeley, California. She co-produced and directed *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin* with New York filmmaker Bennett Singer. *Brother Outsider* premiered at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival, with a national broadcast on the PBS program *P.O.V.* The film received numerous awards, including the 2004 GLAAD Media Award, and audience awards at the major American gay and lesbian film festivals. It also received the award for best feature film at New York's New Festival and a number of jury prizes. Kates is a former producer of *Computer Chronicles*, the PBS series, and has worked as a producer, writer, and story consultant on various documentary projects. Kates is a graduate of Stanford University's documentary film and television program; her M.A. thesis project, *Their Own Vietnam*, received the 1995 Student Academy Award® in Documentary.

Numbered, directed by Dana Doron and Uriel Sinai

Featuring compelling interview subjects and visually arresting imagery, *Numbered* is a group portrait of Holocaust survivors who share both internal and external scars of genocide. For some, the tattoo is a badge of honor. For others it is a mark to be hidden or ignored. The numbers have unintentionally transformed them into symbols of the Shoah, evoking responses from others such as guilt, criticism, curiosity, and respect. The film utilizes exquisite black and white still photographs—both formal portraits and photojournalistic images of day-to-day activities—of these remarkable individuals in their twilight years.

Dana Doron is a physician and journalist whose area of research is patient care for senior citizens in Israel and clinical correlations between life events and health among aging populations. She is a volunteer with Physicians for Human Rights, an NGO that offers free medical care to war refugees residing illegally in Israel. As a journalist, Doron worked as a news editor and writer for *Haaretz*.

Uriel Sinai is an acclaimed photojournalist represented by Getty Images. He earned first prize in the World Press Photo Contest for his coverage of the Gaza Strip during Israel's disengagement in 2005, the 2009 Prix Bayeux-Calvados Award for his coverage of the war in Georgia, and other accolades.

The Hangman, directed by Netalie Braun and Avigail Sperber

The life of Shalom Nagar, Eichmann's hangman turned ritual slaughterer, encapsulates the story of Israel from the perspective of a marginalized Yemeni prison warden, who was forced to do the dirty work of hanging the archenemy and bore a national burden that dramatically shaped his life. His jobs in the abattoir,

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together with his memories, make for a fascinating and complex portrait. Shalom Nagar's clear voice from the margins of society, as yet unheard, reveals new insights and carries a deeply humanistic message that is both Jewish and universal. The film was in competition at the 2010 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam and was awarded best documentary at the 2010 Haifa International Film Festival. The film's website is <http://www.the-hangman.info/>

Netalie Braun is a film director, writer, and lecturer based in Tel Aviv. Her film *Gevald* (2008) won first prize at the Tel Aviv LGBT Film Festival and was an Official Selection in the Panorama section of the Berlin International Film Festival. She serves on the artistic committee of the International Women's Film Festival in Israel.

Avigail Sperber won the prize for Best Documentary for her debut film *Yan's Tea House* (1998) at the Haifa International Film Festival. In addition to working as a cinematographer, she has directed and produced four of her own films. She lives and works in Tel Aviv.

Pre-screening panelists included Rob Fruchtman, documentary filmmaker and consultant to the Lynn and Jules Kroll Fund for Jewish Documentary Film; Andrew Ingall, Program Officer for the Arts at the Foundation for Jewish Culture and Director of the Lynn and Jules Kroll Fund for Jewish Documentary Film; and Ravit Turjeman, Founder/Managing Director of Dragoman Film Distribution and Curator of the Other Israel Film Festival and the New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival.

Final Film Panelists included:

Michael Lumpkin, Executive Director of International Documentary Association. He is an experienced executive leader with over 20 years at the helm of Frameline, an international media arts organization that presents the San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival, operates Frameline Distribution, and runs other important programs providing funding and training to filmmakers. Michael has served on international festival juries including the Berlin International Film Festival and the Sundance Film Festival.

Natan Meir, the Lorry I. Lokey Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies at Portland State University. He earned his bachelor's in history and Ph.D. in Jewish history from Columbia, where his dissertation focused on the Jewish community in imperial Kiev. After teaching at the University of Southampton in England, he spent a sabbatical in Israel as a postdoctoral fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is a recipient of the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Fund for Doctoral

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Dissertations Fellowship and mentor to one of the fellows associated with the Foundation for Jewish Culture's Jewish Studies Expansion Project at Portland State University.

Kenneth Turan, film critic for the *Los Angeles Times* and NPR's *Morning Edition*, as well as the director of the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prizes. He has been a staff writer for the *Washington Post* and *TV Guide*, and served as the *Times'* book review editor. He is the co-author of *Call Me Anna: The Autobiography of Patty Duke*. He teaches film reviewing and non-fiction writing at the University of Southern California and is on the board of directors of the National Yiddish Book Center. His most recent books are the University of California Press' *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made* and *Never Coming To A Theater Near You*, published by Public Affairs Press.

John-Keith Wasson, a graduate of the London Film School who has worked predominantly as a cinematographer. His shooting credits include the award-winning *The Devil Came on Horseback*, a documentary exposing the tragedy taking place in Darfur as seen through the eyes of an American witness who has since returned to the US to take action to stop it. His newest film *Surviving Hitler: A Love Story* received a grant from the Lynn and Jules Kroll Fund for Jewish Documentary Film in 2009 and won the Inspiration Award at the 2010 Full Frame Documentary Film Festival.

Pamela Brown Lavitt, director of AJC Seattle Jewish Film Festival. Lavitt completed her doctoral coursework in Jewish folklore and theatre history at New York University with fellowships in Yiddish Studies at Columbia University and YIVO archives. She served as oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archive's "Weaving Women's Project," which culminated in an exhibit at Seattle's Museum of History & Industry in 2003, and research scholar at The Jewish Museum (New York) exhibition *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies and Broadcasting*.

About the Foundation for Jewish Culture:

The Foundation for Jewish Culture invests in creative individuals in order to nurture a vibrant and enduring Jewish identity, culture and community. This goal is achieved through the provision of grants, recognition awards, networking opportunities and professional development services to artists and scholars. We collaborate with cultural institutions, Jewish organizations, consortia, and funders to support the work of these creative individuals. The Foundation also educates and builds audiences to provide meaningful Jewish cultural experiences

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to the American public, and advocates for the importance of Jewish culture as a core component of Jewish life.

For more information about the Foundation for Jewish Culture and its programs, visit <http://www.jewishculture.org>.

Film stills available upon request.

For more information, please contact Brigade:

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