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## ANDREW BERENDS FILM FELLOWSHIP ANNOUNCES ITS INAUGURAL 2020 FELLOWS

In these challenging times The Andrew Berends Film Fellowship is pleased to announce the winners of its inaugural Fellowship.

A total of \$20,000, personal mentorships with leading filmmakers **Gary Hustwit, David Sampliner, and Gretchen Hildebran**, and other opportunities for career and project advancement are presented to:

- **Braulio Jatar and Anaïs Michel** for their moving depiction of Venezuelan refugees trying to rebuild their lives in *Cùcuta* (working title);
- **Angelos Rallis** for his heart-rending portrait of an orphaned girl in Bangladesh searching for her birth father in *Mighty Afrin* (working title);
- **Tom Laffay** for his stirring work about the identity and spirituality of the Siona indigenous people in Colombia in *Tigre Eléctrico* (working title).

The Fellowship Board is proud to support these brave and ambitious filmmakers, to help them move their projects forward in a time of much uncertainty, and to see Andrew Berends' legacy embodied in their work. Additional information about the Fellows and their films can be found on the following pages.

The Andrew Berends Film Fellowship would like to thank all of our generous donors, both individuals and foundations, as well as our friends at IFP, VICE, D-Word, Pure Non-Fiction and the Karen Schmeer Film Editing Fellowship. Special thanks to Fellowship Board members Aaron Soffin, Michiel Pilgram, Brenden Hussey, Maria Ibrahimova, and Jason Gardner.

For those interested in applying to the 2021 Fellowship, the application will be released in Fall 2020 at [andrewberends.net](http://andrewberends.net). As the Fellowship Board begins to plan for next year's Fellowship, [contributions can be made](#) through its fiscal sponsor IFP.



**Braulio Jatar** was born and raised in Venezuela where he began his career as a visual journalist, documenting social issues and violent protests. He has successfully directed, shot and produced over 50 short pieces about the Venezuelan crisis amassing millions of views. Since then he has furthered his studies in documentary filmmaking in New York City. Subsequently, he directed, produced and shot the documentary short about the Venezuela 2017 protests, titled "Where Chaos Reigns" (co-directed with Anaïs Michel), which has received HBO's Honorable mention at the Miami International Festival, won the Golden Gate Award for best documentary short at the San Francisco International Film festival as well as the Soapbox Award in Denmark's Odense Film Festival.

**Anaïs Michel** is a New York City based documentary filmmaker. After receiving her Bachelor's degree from La Sorbonne and a Master's degree from the French Press Institute, Anaïs left Paris to study filmmaking in New York. After graduating, she worked as an editor in Portland, Oregon with an Oscar nominated director. In New York, she worked at Vice and HBO. She worked as an Associate Editor on the HBO documentary Lenny, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival in 2018. Most recently, she joined forces with Braulio Jatar to work on the award winning film "Where Chaos Reigns", a short documentary about the Venezuelan crisis. Since 2019 Anaïs has been an editing instructor at the New York Film Academy.

Film description: *Cùcuta*: 5,000 Venezuelans cross the border into Colombia every day, through the border town of Cùcuta, with no intention of returning home. Every - single - day. There is no end in sight for this massive influx of migrants who are traveling with all their belongings on their backs. Luckily, Colombia, unlike most countries in the region (and the world) has decided to open its doors.

The lives of the characters will convey every hardship but also every moment of fulfillment these migrants go through in order to find a better life. From a single mother of 5 struggling to find a roof for her children, to a group of kids living in a soup kitchen and somehow maintaining their innocence despite the chaotic environment surrounding them, as well as a Colombian immigration officer who's job is to regulate the entry of Venezuelans through the border and in some cases even send them back. This film is an immersive experience into life on one of the busiest borders in the world and how, maybe, the answer to immigration might be in Colombia's hands.

[cucutadocumentary.wixsite.com/cucutafilm](http://cucutadocumentary.wixsite.com/cucutafilm)



**Angelos Rallis** has a background in Film, Anthropology and photography. He started his career as a TV and theatre director in Greece for the Greek National Television (ERT). In 2006 he became an elected member of the International Federation of Journalists (UK) and commenced a long term project documenting London's East End emerging cultures and communities. Angelos' early work has been published in newspapers such as Ethnos and The Guardian and has been used by press agencies such as Eagle Press (UK) and Reporters (Belgium). He is also the author and photographer of the book Reflections on Chinese Policy in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Angelos did his cinematic directorial debut with the film *A Place for Everyone* which premiered in competition at the Viennale International Film Festival. His second feature film *Shingal, Where Are You?* premiered at IDFA. *A Place for Everyone* and *Shingal, Where Are You?* have screened at over 80 International Film Festivals receiving some 14 awards and 23 nominations. Angelos has recently been selected to participate as an Emerging Producer 2020 in the 8th Edition of Ji.hlava IDFF in association with Berlinale.

Film description: *Mighty Afrin* is a coming-of-age story that follows a young orphan girl living in a flood-prone island at the Brahmaputra river. Afrin's character reflects the battle against the greatest uncertainty and fear in the river basin – the flood and poverty. During the floods, she transforms into a heroine that shows her remarkable resilience and adaptation qualities. Fleeing her home after it is destroyed during a major storm, she embarks on a journey to meet the father who abandoned her as a child. A quest that ultimately brings Afrin face-to-face with the inescapable complexity of abandoned orphans and unskilled labour problems in Bangladesh forcing her to accept early her adulthood. While the film touches on very important contemporary social and global themes such as female empowerment, human rights and climate justice, the approach has a more timeless feeling reminiscent of an ancient Greek drama set in the context of today's Bangladesh.

[angelosrallis.com/films/mighty-afrin/](http://angelosrallis.com/films/mighty-afrin/)



**Tom Laffay** is a self-shooting documentary film director and visual journalist specializing in documentary investigations in Latin America. Based in Colombia since 2016, he has covered the ongoing violence against human rights defenders over the course of the country's troubled peace process and socio-environmental issues facing the Amazon. He is a member of RISC combat medical training class XVII and a recipient of a Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting grant for documenting mercury trafficking in the Guiana Shield. Tom is bilingual (English / Spanish) and travels extensively producing documentary films for organizations like New Media Advocacy Project and IUCN in South America, Africa and the US. His film *Nos Están Matando (They're Killing Us)* was screened to the US Congress, The United Nations in Geneva, Cinema Politica in Montreal, as well as in community and grassroots settings after a viral open-source release. His work has been featured in *The New Yorker*, *National Geographic*, *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, *InfoAmazonia*, and he contributes to the Colombian national newspaper *El Espectador*. He's currently producing his first feature-length film together with the Siona Indigenous Nation of Putumayo, Colombia.

Film Description: *Tigre Eléctrico* (working title), is a feature-length documentary film about the identity and spirituality of the Siona indigenous people in Colombia. The Siona live between the modernizing, Northwestern Amazon world of commerce and coca production and the spiritual realm which they access through the drinking of the plant medicine called Yagé (Ayahuasca). And while respected by other indigenous groups in the Amazon as masters of the Yagé practice, they are now facing physical and cultural extinction due to a resurgence of armed conflict in their ancestral territory. The film follows three characters as they navigate a web of external and internal challenges. Taita Pablo harvests medicinal plants from the jungle, wary of the army helicopters passing overhead; Adiela, clears a riverbank of mines that killed one of the Siona's elders, and teaches the community's children how to avoid them; Mario, stripped of his leadership by his community, must redeem himself as the leader capable of navigating the confluence of threats to his people. Interweaving the lives of these characters and their interactions with the community at large, each scene will play out in observational vignettes that immerse viewers in the Siona's world. Their individual struggles offer us a window of understanding into the Siona's larger fight for survival.

[www.tomlaffay.com](http://www.tomlaffay.com)