

hotdocs presents

CITIZEN MINUTES

Hot Docs presents *Citizen Minutes*, a short doc collection highlighting ordinary Canadians doing extraordinary things to make their communities better places. Meet bold and unlikely changemakers who inspire us to jump in and get involved in civic issues close to our homes and hearts.

Citizen Minutes also includes an educational component, with Hot Docs developing complementary resources linked to curricula to enable educators to use the films as teaching tools. The films will also be used in community settings allowing groups to engage in conversation around taking action and creating positive social change.

CREATIVE PRODUCERS:

Lisa Jackson, Door Number 3 Productions
Lauren Grant, Clique Pictures

MEDIA CONTACT:

Jonathan Da Silva
Communications Director, Hot Docs
jdasilva@hotdocs.ca

SCREENING REQUESTS:

Citizenminutes.ca

***Citizen Minutes* films:**

**BODY
POLITICS**

**EXCLUDED
BY DESIGN**

**THE
GIFT**

**JEAN SWANSON:
WE NEED
A NEW MAP**

**MENDING
A CRACK
IN THE SKY**

**MILITANT
MOTHER**

**NOURRIR
LES RÊVES**

**RIDE
FAIR**

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BODY POLITICS



Director/Writer: Aisha Fairclough **Editor:** Pauline Decroix **Original Music:** Virginia Kilbertus, Suad Bushnaq
| 8 min | Canada

Synopsis: In a fatphobic image-conscious world, educator, activist and eccentric cat-lady-turned-politician Dr. Jill Andrew takes her fight for body justice, human rights, representation, access and equity to the legislature as the first queer Black person elected as a member of provincial parliament. Here's a glimpse into a 40-year story of becoming told through the eyes of her filmmaking partner...Don't blink!



Director bio: Aisha Fairclough is a filmmaker and television producer. She has developed, researched and produced unscripted content for several networks including Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN) Canada, Slice, HGTV, Showtime, Global TV, Food Network Canada, TVO, CBC and Crave. She is an alumni of Reelworld Film Festival's E20 Emerging program.

Also the co-founder of Body Confidence Canada, Aisha sits on the board of Inside Out LGBTQ+ Film Festival serving as Strategic Planning Committee Chair and on the advisory council for the Ryerson University School of Fashion. Aisha's cheeky quotes on fashion and body positivity can be found in Toronto Star, Metro, Etalk, Refinery 29, Huffington Post, BBC, CTV News and Essence Magazine. She once brought her fashion chops to the small screen as Lead Stylist on the primetime series Sex with Sunny Megatron on Showtime.

In 2019 she graced the cover of Chatelaine Magazine's June/July Issue celebrating her body-positivity and in 2020 she was a featured artist in Buddies in Bad Times Queer Pride Analogue Project celebrating Pride in Place. Aisha currently lives in Toronto with her partner and their two cats Josephine Baker and Dorothy Dandridge.

Director statement: Many people say politicians do not work hard. Well, they haven't met Jill. To me she's just Jill—the tireless workaholic who wears her heart on her sleeve and passionately champions humanity at every turn. I want to share a small piece of who I get to see every day with the world. As a filmmaker I want to tell the stories not often told from perspectives that are routinely overlooked. As a Black queer woman, mine is a lens not often seen or heard. We are here and our stories matter.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Aisha Fairclough
fairclough.aisha@gmail.com

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EXCLUDED BY DESIGN



Directors: Simon Madore, Gabriel Tougas | **Producer:** David Baeta | **Writer:** Chaz Beaudette
| **Cinematographers:** Robert Mentov, Shauna Townley | **Editor:** Chelsea Bennett | **Sound Recordist:** Igal Petel | **Composer:** Mario Lepage | 3 min | Canada

Synopsis: Writer and community organizer Dave Meslin thinks that bad public notices are hurting our democracy—and he's calling on graphic designers to show us what we're missing.



Simon Madore bio: Simon Madore is a French-Canadian filmmaker based in Toronto with almost two decades of experience in the television industry. Throughout that time, he has worked on multiple documentary series addressing issues of public concern in Canadian society—subjects like globalism, plastic pollution and language rights in Canada



Gabriel Tougas bio: Gabriel Tougas is a filmmaker and television director based in Winnipeg. Over the past decade, he has written and directed more than fifty hours of French-language lifestyle and documentary programming, broadcast nationally on TVA, TFO, SRC, AMI-télé and APTN. Frequent themes in Gabriel's work include environmentalism, cultural identity and youth engagement.

Directors' statement: Why public notices?

Because in a world of huge challenges and seemingly insurmountable problems, this is an underestimated issue that is relatively easy to fix. The bar is so low that even a small change would be a huge improvement—and we know this because many municipalities across Canada are starting to do it. Civic engagement has many obstacles. Better notices won't fix everything, but improving them gets the ball rolling on a healthier culture of participation.

Public notices form and content are legally mandated. The bureaucracy doesn't get to pick how they look; notices need to look that way.

Okay, but laws and bylaws are changed all the time; they're not immutable. If the notices aren't serving their purpose, let's change the mandate so they do. And even if we imagined that that was somehow impossible, there is always another way. Why couldn't we put up two notices? A big, clear, beautiful sign next to the small, ineligible, legally mandated one.

What was your favourite quote from Dave that didn't make the cut?

Glad you asked! Here it is: I think a lot of people see civic engagement as a chore. When I talk about, 'everyone should get involved,' they're like, 'Oh, what a hassle,' but it's the opposite. Why would you want someone else making decisions for you? When you were a kid, your mom decided what you'd wear. Don't you like that you get to choose your own clothes now? When we let government do stuff on our behalf without participating, you're kind of letting your mom decide what you're wearing. We're being dressed by our mom. Let's grow up. Let's take control of our cities, our parks, our neighborhoods and put on our own clothes.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Gabriel Tougas
gabriel@gabrielougas.com



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THE GIFT



Director/Cinematographer: Rachel Garrick | **Editor:** Nadine Arpin | **Illustration:** Don Ningewance |
Narration: Rachel Garrick | **Sound Recordist:** Rachel Garrick | 3 min | Canada

Synopsis: A lesson in compassion and generosity results in a lifelong gift. Set in a small Northwestern Ontario town, a father takes an opportunity to pass on important teachings to his daughter.



Director bio: Rachel Garrick is a band member of Lac Seul First Nation and resides in Hudson, a small community in Northwestern Ontario. The last film she worked on, as producer, was titled, *Jane and the Wolf*. It was screened at local, national and international film festivals and broadcasted nationally on APTN. She participated in the Docs North Film Bootcamp in Thunder Bay and is also an NSI Aboriginal Documentary 2015 alumni.

Director statement: I am so thankful to have participated in *Citizen Minutes*. It was a great opportunity to honour my father by passing on his teachings to others around compassion and kindness. I am so grateful for the talent and team that I worked with to create the film. They were so patient, understanding and generous with their talent and skills. I can only hope that this film inspires kindness and respect for others.

This film demonstrates “Mino Bimaadiziwin,” an Ojibway phrase meaning “live the good life.” Part of living a good life is to dedicate a share of your efforts to the greater good, giving assistance and showing kindness wherever needed. Traditionally, many life lessons relating to Mino Bimaadiziwin were shared through storytelling, ceremonies, teachings and hands on experience passed down from one generation to the next. The story focuses on a father taking the opportunity to teach his daughter about some of the key principles of Mino Bimaadiziwin. If you don’t have teachings to pass on, create them.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Rachel Garrick
rachelgarrick513@gmail.com



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JEAN SWANSON: WE NEED A NEW MAP



Director: Teresa Alfeld | **Cinematographer:** Vince Arvidson | **Editor:** Lawrence Le Lam | **Sound Recordist:** Caisha Thompson | 7 min | Canada

Synopsis: A profile of veteran activist and first-term Vancouver city councillor Jean Swanson as she works alongside the next generation of anti-poverty activists fighting systemic inequality.



Director bio: Teresa Alfeld is a director from Vancouver and the unceded Coast Salish territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations. She is a member of the Director's Guild of Canada, and the Documentary Organization of Canada. Teresa is drawn to complex characters navigating complicated worlds, and her films embrace both the humour and pathos of the human experience.

Teresa's feature documentary *The Rankin File: Legacy of a Radical* (produced with Opus 59 Films) was the opening night gala film at DOXA Documentary Film Festival in 2018 and had its broadcast premiere on The Knowledge Network in 2019. Teresa has written and directed several award-winning short comedy-dramas including *Closet Carnivore* (2004), *Charlie Gauvin* (2012) and *Roadkill* (2013), which have screened at film festivals across Canada.

Teresa will be directing her second feature documentary *Doug and the Slugs and Me* for CBC documentary Channel (with Opus 59 Films) in 2021.

Director statement: I first met Jean Swanson over ten years ago at the Poverty Olympics, an event protesting excessive spending on the 2010 Vancouver Olympics while the homelessness crisis raged on. I was taken aback by Jean—this soft-spoken older woman commanding the attention of the packed Carnegie Centre as she spoke clearly and emphatically about the need to end legislated poverty. We later reconnected when I made my first documentary about Harry Rankin and the progressive movement he helped build in Vancouver, and which Jean was a large part of. Since then, I've had the privilege of getting to know her as a colleague and friend.

Often called the "Canadian Bernie Sanders," Jean has the credibility and integrity forged through a decades-long career fighting the systems that keep people entrenched in poverty. Now that she is in her first elected role as a city councillor, it's been fascinating to watch Jean navigate creating change from inside government, while also working alongside the next generation of activists.

Jean Swanson: We Need a New Map features Jean candidly reflecting on the highs and lows of her forty-year career of activism, and what it means to dedicate your life to effecting change. My hope is for this documentary to inspire folks young and old through witnessing Jean's incredible journey and the tenacity that has defined her career. I hope audiences will also be galvanized by the energy and dedication of Jean's young colleagues Sara and Ishmam, and that viewers will consider their own paths towards becoming civically engaged.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Teresa Alfeld
teresa@savoyfilms.com

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MENDING A CRACK IN THE SKY



Directors: Roble Issa & Zach Jama | **Cinematographers:** Alex Tse | **Editor:** Lawrence Jackman | **Sound Recordist:** Jason Milligan | 8 min | Canada

Synopsis: Shamso Mohamoud and Shamso Elmi both lost their sons to violence and watched their alleged killers walk free without so much as a legal prosecution. Now, the two Somali-Canadian mothers have organized a group “Mending a Crack in the Sky” to collectively combat gun violence and hardship while facing cultural and racial barriers.



Roble Issa bio: Roble Issa is a Somali-Canadian filmmaker based in Toronto. After graduating with a degree in Psychology from York University, he pursued a career in film, starting as a screenwriter before making the transition to directing. His work explores themes such as identity, coming of age, and mental health.



Zach Jama bio: Zach Jama is a documentary filmmaker and engineer. He studied his BSc in Systems Design Engineering from the University of Waterloo in Canada and his MFA in Cinematic Arts in Jordan. In 2019, Zach graduated with a Master of Science (MSc) in Art, Culture and Technology from MIT.

Directors' statement: What happened to Shamso Elmi and Shamso Mohamoud, unfortunately, is not uncommon. Somali mothers in Toronto have been losing their sons to gun violence for a long time now; similarly, in Canada, other black, brown, and indigenous communities face statistically disproportionate murder rates. What is unique about this particular story is that they've managed to channel their grief and use it to empower other mothers to deal with similar tragedies.

If there's one thing we hope people take away from this film, it's the resilience of the Shamsos and the over one hundred other mothers in *Mending a Crack in the Sky*. It is important to remember that before the mothers in this film lost their children to acts of violence, they had escaped a war in Somalia and sought refuge in Canada because of the promise of a safe and prosperous life for their children. To then have that dream ripped away from them in such a tragic fashion, we imagine, would be enough for most people to give up. Yet, they continue to fight for the future of Somali youth despite the overwhelming evidence that the Canadian government does not value their children's lives.

Oftentimes, it's difficult for us to listen to them describe what happened to their sons without envisioning our own mothers and how they would handle a similar situation. This film is a testament to the courage of Shamso Mohamoud and Shamso Elmi, not only because of the important work it documents but also because of the courage they've shown in retelling their story. These powerful mothers were willing to re-open their past wounds for this film, and that is something that we, the filmmakers, do not take lightly; in return, we hope we did their story justice and helped spread their message to a broader audience.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Roble Issa
robissa@yahoo.com

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MILITANT MOTHER



Director/Writer/Producer: Carmen Pollard | **Cinematographers:** Claire Sanford, Grant Baldwin | **Editor:** Carmen Pollard | **Composer:** Brent Belke | **Sound Design & Mix:** Chris McLaren | 8 min | Canada

Synopsis: To get to class on time, children from the Raymur Place social housing project were forced to jump shunting train cars that stood in their path. In 1971, after months of petitioning for a safe crossing, a group of mothers made their voices heard by blockading CN rail from delivering goods.



Director bio: Carmen Pollard is a Canadian filmmaker focused on stories that centre underrepresented voices and perspectives within the arts, social and climate justice. She has worked throughout her professional career as a director, editor, producer and digital compositing artist. Her award-winning work has been broadcast throughout North America, has screened theatrically, on Netflix, and at festivals worldwide.

Director statement: I stumbled across the Hot Docs call for proposals on stories that center civic engagement right around the time I'd been reading about the Militant Mothers of Raymur. Being an avid cyclist and a long-time East Vancouver resident, I often access their pedestrian bridge to pass moving trains. In noticing the plaque and signage, I became curious about this history.

Through my research I found that this story had been written and spoken about by journalists and historians. But what about the women who had taken great risks to see that a safe crossing be built for the community? This pandemic prevented us from filming a chorus of voices. However, in speaking with some of the mothers and grown-up children it became clear that the right individual to tell this story is the brilliant and generous changemaker, Carolyn Jerome.

Militant Mother tells a triumphant tale of direct action from precisely 50 years ago. There's significant value in keeping such stories alive, as reminders and as guides on how to ensure all voices be heard past the din of colonial systems. The women in this story understood that seeing one another as worthy of respect, and of life, begins most powerfully in early childhood. The women intuitively understood that larger problems might not be solved by individuals, but that the power of cooperative community engagement can shift minds, policy and systems.

I'm certain audiences will be moved by the humble spirit and legacy of Carolyn Jerome, and the Militant Mothers. It's my hope that viewers will be inspired to effect positive change in their own communities, through collective action or personal transformation.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Carmen Pollard
carmen.pollard@gmail.com



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NOURRIR LES RÊVES



Directors: Kimberley Ann Surin & Aïcha Morin-Baldé | **Cinematographers:** Thomas Soto | **Editor:** Myriam Magassouba | **Sound Recordist:** René Portillo Ruiz | **Composer:** Alexis Elina | 6 min | Canada

Synopsis: In 2007, Lasallien Center opened their doors in St-Michel—one of the most disadvantaged boroughs on the island of Montreal. *Nourrir les Rêves* introduces audiences to Paul Evra, the young altruistic director who grew up there and is leading the center and their mission to help feed the numerous families in the area who are food insecure.



Kimberley Ann Surin bio: Based in Montreal, Kimberley Ann is a Haitian-Canadian filmmaker. She graduated in 2016 from Pennsylvania State University in Communications - Film and TV. Over the years, she had the chance to work on a variety of interesting and different projects, from fiction to documentary, advertising and promotional commercials to publicity, as well as animation. In 2020, she directed and wrote her first documentary *Against All Odds*, a short film about the lack of diversity in professional and junior hockey with retired NHL player Georges Laraque as main protagonist. Her focus in all her creative work is to uplift the voices of Black, marginalized, and under-represented talent in front of and behind the camera. Kimberley Ann is currently in development of a feature-length documentary and feature-length drama film.



Aïcha Morin-Baldé bio: Aïcha was born and raised in Montreal of French-Canadian and Guinean descent. After graduating in Film & Communications, she completed two consecutive internships at established production companies. She has since accumulated extensive experience as a director, producer, editor and production coordinator, and has worked on various types of web productions including web series, fiction, music videos and documentaries. Using the camera to elevate black voices and stories has always been the driving force behind Aïcha's work. She is passionate about creating films that help grow Black representation in media and consistently aims to shine the spotlight on the unique individuals in her community. Her first short film *Knots* explores Black women's relationships with their natural hair and the stigmas surrounding it. It premiered at the Toronto Black Film Festival and will also be available at FIFBM in September 2021. She is currently writing her first short drama, a feminist piece on the subject of abortions.

Directors' statement: Working on this film, we had the wonderful opportunity to spend time with the rich community of St-Michel. Although none of us were from the neighbourhood, they made us and our team feel right at home. We would like to thank Nathan Zoh Bi, Kendra Coulibaly, Pau Evra and his dedicated team, and all the other participants who took the time to speak with us. We would also like to thank Hot Docs for making this film possible and for supporting the Black French-Canadian community of Montreal.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Kimberley Ann Surin
kimberleysurinproductions@gmail.com

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Director/Cinematographer: Javier Lovera | **Additional Cinematography:** Juan Angel | **Editor:** Lawrence Jackman, Maria Todorov-Topouzov | **Sound Recordist:** David Dunlap, Elias Fuentes | 7 min | Canada

Synopsis: Three fearless community organizers with a history of standing up against big tech corporations, embark on an uphill political fight to regulate Uber and Lyft in Toronto so that these companies operate in the public interest, respecting communities, drivers and passengers.



Director bio: Javier is a filmmaker and photographer exploring the intersection between technology and society. With a M.Sc. in Aerospace Engineering, he is an alumni of DOC Breakthrough Program, RIDM Talent Lab, and Hot Docs Deal Maker. Select clients include The Guardian, The Globe and Mail, FASHION Magazine, BMW, NIKE, and ROOTS.

Director statement: I first met Thorben and JJ through their involvement in #blocksidewalk, a citizen coalition that fought against Google's development of a "smart city" neighborhood in Toronto. I've been inspired by their work ever since and admire their committed belief that a small group of independent citizens can build the critical mass necessary to successfully stand against powerful corporations that affect our livelihoods and our democracy.

I believe we are at a moment when our democracy is being challenged in a myriad of ways, both internally and externally, and we must reclaim it through civic engagement. I hope citizens of all ages find inspiration in *Ridefair's* work and become more active in their communities, fighting for their beliefs and ideals.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Javier Lovera
javier@javierlovera.com

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