

'Jane's story has resonance for women of all ages'

3 trailblazing women get spotlight in Sundance docus

By Lindsey Bahr

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Jane Fonda and Gloria Allred were all born within eight years of one another — 1933, 1937 and 1941. While their trajectories couldn't be more different, they're also similar in some ways. Each went on to defy expectations of their time and become powerhouse representatives of women, and all are getting the spotlight this year in three films playing at the Sundance Film Festival.

Ginsburg soldiered through sexist obstacles, like the Dean of Harvard Law School asking "How do you justify taking a spot from a qualified man?" to become the second female Supreme Court Justice in history. Allred devoted her energy to the often thankless task of taking on powerful men like Bill Cosby and Donald Trump (and more recently Harvey Weinstein) on behalf of powerless women. And Fonda eschewed a life of comforts as the beautiful daughter of Hollywood royalty to become a self-actualized activist.

Director Susan Lacy's "Jane Fonda in Five Acts", an HBO Films production that will air sometime this year, is an unflinching account of Fonda's life told through archive footage and new interviews with Fonda, who reflects on everything from her mother's suicide and her eating disorder to the Hanoi Jane infamy and history-making workout videotape with heart wrenching (and warming) candor and insight. It is the story of, as she says at age 80 and in the beginning of her last act, becoming a "fully realized Jane" separate from a man, whether it's her various husbands ("none of my marriages were democratic," she said), or the shadow of Henry Fonda, who was quite distant as a father but took the time to call her fat when she was growing up.

"I think Jane's story has resonance for women of all ages and ex-

periences," Lacy said in her director's statement. "Hopefully, viewers of this film will see a woman of courage and spunk whose life is an example of how change and growth are possible at any age."

In the case of Ginsburg, "RBG" directors Julie Cohen and Betsy West saw an opportunity to put a spotlight the newly "internet famous" Associate Justice.

Sensation

"Justice Ginsburg started to gain some fame as the 'Notorious RBG' in the wake of some of her blistering dissents in 2013 and 2014," West said. "She became a kind of internet sensation and Julie and I, great admirers of Justice Ginsburg, realized that a lot of her new fans didn't know the whole story and didn't understand the role that she played in changing the laws affecting men and women in this country."

The film looks at her childhood (climbing on garage roofs and wanting to do what the boys did), her exceptionally supportive husband, some of her early triumphs for women, her friendship with Antonin Scalia, her love of opera and, yes, that workout that you may have heard about (you see Ginsburg holding a plank like a boss).

"By schooling people in some of the legal history of the women's rights movement and some of the things that Justice Ginsburg achieved earlier in her career, we're trying to create sort of an emotional experience," Cohen said. "We want people leaving the theater feeling happy and inspired."

Sophie Sartain and Roberta Grossman meanwhile started documenting women's rights attorney Gloria Allred long before Me Too and sexual misconduct became the story of the moment — and even before the Bill Cosby accusers started getting significant attention.

The Netflix original documentary premieres on the streaming service on Feb 9.

Their voices don't stop on the screen, either, and all three women attended and spoke at the festival.

Both Allred, 76, and Fonda, 80, led the Respect Rally over the weekend, giving speeches to those who dared to brave the freezing temperatures and talking about this extraordinary moment for women.

"This is the year that women's voices have been heard, the year when women broke our silence about the injustices we have suffered, and the year where we said to rich, powerful, famous men you can break our hearts, but you cannot break our spirit," Allred said to the Park City crowd Saturday.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: "RBG", a look at the life and career of Supreme Court Justice **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**, has sold to Magnolia Pictures and Participant Media.

Financial terms of the sale were not disclosed, but the deal is for worldwide distribution, which runs the gamut from theatrical distribution to home video and streaming platforms. CNN Films, which produced the movie, holds US broadcast rights to "RBG".

Ginsburg made the trek last weekend from **Washington, DC**, to **Park City, Utah**, for the film's Sundance Film Festival premiere. She received a hero's welcome at the snow-caked mountainside resort. The 84-year-old Ginsburg held forth on the #MeToo moment and women's rights in a question-and-answer session following the first showing of the film and in an interview with NPR's **Nina Totenberg** (a longtime friend). (Agencies)

Film

Variety



A model presents a creation by Zuhair Murad during the 2018 Spring/Summer Haute Couture Collection fashion show on Jan 24 in Paris. (AFP) — See Page 17

Film

Middle Eastern filmmakers celebrate historic Oscar nom

A provocative drama in 'Insult'

By Lindsey Bahr

In the provocative Lebanese film "The Insult," a minor conflict over a gutter between two ordinary men in Beirut spirals and escalates to the level of national significance with the stability of the country hanging in the balance.

The film, from director Ziad Doueiri ("West Beirut," "The Attack"), on Tuesday became Lebanon's first foreign language Oscar contender. It's also, somewhat fittingly, caused a fair amount of controversy internationally, being banned in countries like Jordan.

The insult in question begins as almost a misunderstanding. A man tasked with bringing the apartments in one part of Beirut up to code, fixes an illegal drainpipe that has been leaking dirty water on himself and his workers. The owner tells him not to touch his apartment and smashes the newly installed pipe. The construction worker shouts an expletive at him.

The rub is that one man, the construction worker Yasser Salameh (Kamel El Basha), is a Palestinian refugee. The other, the owner of the apartment Tony Hanna (Adel Karam), is a Lebanese member of the Christian Party. Everyday offenses and clashes of egos aren't just annoyances. In this context, they take on the weight of everyone's history, prejudices and traumas.

Tony, who runs hot through most of the film, is incensed by the Yasser's swearing and becomes wholly obsessed with getting an apology — much to the bafflement of his very pregnant wife, Shirine (Rita Hayek). Yasser, subdued but proud to a fault, doesn't think he's done anything particularly wrong — it was Tony who smashed the pipe, after all — but his boss convinces him to apologize, reminding him that he's a visitor in "their" neighborhood.

The apology couldn't go worse. When Yasser arrives to Tony's auto shop, Tony is listening to some anti-Palestinian rhetoric on the radio. Then Yasser fails to immediately apologize and Tony, once again, gets hot and says he wished Ariel Sharon would have "wiped you all out." Yasser punches Tony in the ribs, and sud-

denly they're dealing with an assault.

The films shifts then to a tumultuous courtroom drama, first with both men representing themselves (to an unsatisfactory conclusion for Tony) and then with high-powered lawyers at their side who stoke the flames of the conflict just as each individual is starting to waver on whether it's all worth it.

Empathetic

There is drama between the two lawyers too, a father and daughter arguing on opposite sides. The father, Wajdi (Camille Salameh) is a through-and-through nationalist. The daughter, Nadine (Diamand Bou Abboud) is empathetic to the Palestinian plight. Mercifully for those not steeped in the history of the conflict, the smart script makes it easy to get wrapped up in the film without a deep understanding of the situation at the outset.

"The Insult," as far as I can tell, doesn't appear to have any obvious agenda or bias, beyond empathy. Each side gets impassioned and compelling arguments made on its behalf, and the audience becomes the de facto jury, weighing each new piece of evidence and revelation. The city and nation outside of the courthouse take notice of the increasingly inflammatory trial — protests in the streets, pundits debating on television, and the sense that violent conflict could break out at any moment.

It's quite a riveting and though-provoking journey, with compelling and nuanced performances all around, and, although it is quite serious, not without moments of levity.

Also:

PARIS: A Lebanese and a Syrian film director both made cinema history this week when their films became the first ever from their home countries to be nominated for Oscars.

Ziad Doueiri's Lebanese drama "The Insult," was nominated for best foreign language film, while Syrian **Firas Fayyad's** "Last Men in Aleppo," which focuses on the work of the White Helmets volunteer rescuers, was nominated for best documentary.

"The Insult," set in Beirut, is about a verbal slanging match between two individuals that leads to a highly publicized trial highlighting the sectarian tensions simmering in Lebanese society.

"It was such good news when we got it, because this is the first time Lebanon arrives to the Oscar and you know you offer a little bit of hope," Doueiri told Reuters. "It's like winning a medal, it's like going to the Olympics and your team for the first time wins the bronze medal or the silver medal."

The film is the first from Lebanon to be nominated for an Oscar since the small Mediterranean country began submitting movies for consideration in 1978.

"The Insult" has been screened in Lebanon despite a boycott campaign prompted by the fact that Doueri made a previous film, "The Attack," in Israel, with which his country remains in a technical state of war.

Doueiri was subsequently arrested and questioned by a military court, but was not charged with any offense.

The other nominees for best foreign language film include "A Fantastic Woman" from **Germany**, "Loveless" from **Russia**, "On Body and Soul" from **Hungary** and "The Square" from **Sweden**.

Fayyad, whose documentary follow the White Helmets group in a besieged Syrian city, told Reuters that he hoped the recognition would inspire others in his war-torn country.

"Well, it's really great. I'm proud about that. It opens the road for other filmmakers and artists to think that there's nothing impossible, especially in a time (when) your country is destroyed, your resources are less, and the people who could stand with you are less," he said, speaking in English.

Syria first submitted a film for Oscar consideration last year, to no avail. "Last Men in Aleppo" faces competition from "Abacus: Small Enough to Jail," "Faces Places," "Icarus," and "Strong Island."

Another film about the White Helmets, eponymously titled, won the Oscar for documentary short film in 2017. (Agencies)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, JANUARY 26-27, 2018

LOS ANGELES: STX Entertainment has set a June 1 release date for the romantic drama "Adrift," starring **Shailene Woodley** and **Sam Claflin**, filling the spot vacated by "Deadpool 2."

"Adrift" is based on the true story of **Tami Oldham Ashcraft** who, after being knocked unconscious by the most massive hurricane in the history of the Pacific Ocean, awakens to find her fiancé **Richard Sharp** badly injured, their boat in ruins, and no means of communication or navigation. She must race against the clock to save herself and the only man she's ever loved.

The film was directed by **Baltasar Kormakur** from a screenplay by **Aaron Kandell**, **Jordan Kandell**, and **David Branson Smith**, based on the book "Red Sky in Mourning: A True Story of Love, Loss, and Survival at Sea" by Ashcraft with **Susea McGehearty**. Producers are Kormakur and the Kandells. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: "Black-ish" star **Marsai Martin** is executive producing and starring in Universal's comedy "Little," which is based on the 13-year-old's idea.

The story focuses on an adult woman who gets the chance to relive her carefree youth after the pressures of adulthood overwhelm her. "Peoples" writer-director **Tina Gordon Chism** is attached to direct from the script, which was initially written by "Girls Trip" writer **Tracy Oliver**. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: **Snoop Dogg** has joined the cast of the cast of the parody movie "Unbelievable!" opposite **Nichelle Nichols** and is executive producing for Archangel Films.

Steven L. Fawcette is directing a story of four off-beat astronauts who travel to the Moon on a rescue mission and wind up trying to save the Earth from plant aliens. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: On the heels of receiving an Oscar nomination for "The Big Sick," **Emily V. Gordon** has been hired to write the adaptation of **Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney's** novel "The Nest" for Amazon's film studio.

Jill Soloway and **Andrea Sper-**

ling will serve as producers on the project through Soloway's production company, Topple. **Carly Kahane** will be the executive on the project for Topple.

"The Nest" is set in **New York City** as three siblings gather to confront their charismatic and reckless older brother, freshly released from rehab. Months earlier, the brother got behind the wheel of



Woodley



Martin

a car with a 19-year-old waitress as his passenger. The ensuing accident has endangered the joint trust fund, also known as "The Nest," which they are months away from finally receiving. (RTRS)

NEW DELHI: Thousands of police in riot gear guarded cinemas across **India** on Thursday amid

threats of violence by Hindu hardliners opposed to the release of a movie about a legendary Hindu queen and a Muslim king.

Some schools near Delhi closed after an attack on a school bus while distributors in several states have said they will not show "Padmaavat" because of fears of violence.

The Bollywood epic still opened in nearly 5,000 cinemas

across the country early Thursday under heightened security.

Paramilitary forces and police in riot gear manned barriers around cinemas in New Delhi, **Mumbai** and other main cities.

Radical groups say the film falsely portrays **Queen Padmavati**. The producers vehemently deny the claim while most historians doubt that Padmavati even existed. (AFP)