

IMPOSSIBLE TOWN

A FATHER'S DREAM. A DAUGHTER'S DUTY.

2023 PRESS KIT



LOGLINE

When her father dies unexpectedly, Dr. Ayne Amjad is thrust to the helm of a decades-long struggle to aid a southern West Virginia town beset by cancer-causing chemicals. Haunted by her late father's mandate to help others at all costs, Ayne is caught between her goal of raising a family and an audacious but all-consuming plan to relocate the town and bring closure to her father's work.

IMPOSSIBLE TOWN is a story of personal ambitions in conflict with deep familial obligations set against the backdrop of loss, grief, and environmental justice in rural Appalachia.

STORY SYNOPSIS

After the untimely death of Pakistani-born oncologist Hassan Amjad, his daughter Ayne seeks a definitive solution to her father's unresolved dream of helping Minden, a former coal-company town polluted with carcinogenic PCBs. No stranger to audacious goals, Ayne hatches a plan to relocate Minden's 250 residents to a plot of land purchased in the wake of her father's passing.



STORY SYNOPSIS

When Ayne encounters resistance from the community, she takes her plans statewide, landing a high-profile role as WV's State Health Officer in the early months of the pandemic. Ayne's star rises as she spearheads a much-lauded vaccine rollout, but the demands of her new position make it all but impossible to pursue her goal of moving Minden and her personal dream of raising a family of her own.

STORY SYNOPSIS

In a last-ditch effort to finish her father's work, Ayne dispatches her personal lawyer to launch a class-action lawsuit against industry titans, the proceeds from which may serve as Minden's best hope of financing relocation. With personal and professional obligations mounting, Ayne must decide how much she is willing to sacrifice to make good on her late father's mandate to help others at all costs.



PARTICIPANTS

**“THE PIECE OF LAND IN ODD IS 97
ACRES OF UNTOUCHED LAND.”**

DR. AYNE AMJAD

PHYSICIAN

Ayne is the daughter of Pakistani and Filipino immigrants born in Beckley, WV. Ayne’s stolid will and penchant for action over introspection, characteristics inherited from her late father, propel her to successively greater leadership roles during the course of the film. Though Ayne serves as Minden’s most vocal champion, she does so at tremendous personal cost.



PARTICIPANTS

“THE SMALL COMMUNITY OF MINDEN IS DYING. YOU CAN’T CLEAN THE PLACE — IT HAS TO BE RELOCATED. SOMEONE HAS TO LOOK UP AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT.”

DR. HASSAN AMJAD

PHYSICIAN

Hassan was beloved as an outspoken advocate and empathetic doctor. He worked doggedly to trace a link between PCBs and Minden’s cancer rate until a massive heart attack led to his untimely death. His passing puts Ayne’s connection with Minden, and thus the story, into motion.





PARTICIPANTS

**“ALL THAT TIME THE MINES
WERE OOZING THAT STUFF
OUT OF THE MOUNTAINS —
IT WAS LIKE A SILENT DEATH.”**

BUTTER THOMAS

MINDEN RESIDENT

Butter Thomas has had front-row seats to Minden’s transformation from thriving coal town to a husk of its former self. Along the way, he’s watched friends and loved ones succumb to cancer. Many think of Butter as the mayor of Minden, and from his home on the town’s main drag he fights for the resources and acknowledgement he believes his town deserves.

PARTICIPANTS

**“I THINK THAT THE YOUNG PEOPLE
NEED TO BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO GET
OUT. I THINK WE OWE THEM THAT.”**

SUSIE WORLEY-JENKINS

MINDEN RESIDENT

Susie is a Minden native and four-time cancer survivor. She acts as a de facto spokesperson for the town's interests, often called upon for press conferences and media sound bites. Though she freely admits she'll probably never leave Minden, Susie fights for the next generation's right to grow up in a safe environment.



PARTICIPANTS

**“THROUGH DEMOCRAT AND
REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATIONS NO
ONE HAS CARED ENOUGH TO SAY —
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?”**

STEPHEN NEW

AYNE'S ATTORNEY

Stephen is a local attorney who specializes in class action lawsuits. Ayne enlists Stephen to work with Butter and Susie to mount a suit against the corporate entities they believe are liable for Minden's health crisis.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Over the last decade, co-directors Meg Griffiths and Scott Faris have created documentary content for nonprofits, foundations, and socially conscious brands through their production company, Universe Creative. Scott grew up in West Virginia, where the majority of his family resides to this day, and has long desired to tell stories about this often misunderstood and misrepresented state.

IMPOSSIBLE TOWN is fundamentally a meditation on loss. Ayne's loss of her father parallels that of Minden's health, hope, and sense of a brighter future. The film highlights how grief can paralyze those caught in its grip, leading to emotionally-driven interpretations of the world that make it difficult to communicate clearly and find compromise.

Moreover, the film asks audiences to question the persistent modern fantasy that complex environmental issues are best solved through singular heroes and miracle solutions rather than the decidedly grittier work of collective, incremental social, political, and legal progress.

APPROACH

A scenic view of a river flowing over large rocks in a wooded area. In the background, several houses are visible, and a bright sun is shining through the trees, creating a warm, golden glow. The water is clear and flows over the rocks, creating small cascades and splashes.

IMPOSSIBLE TOWN takes an observational, character-driven approach to storytelling in an effort to break the stalemate that has emerged between the community and the governmental institutions that exist to serve them. The film aims to spur productive dialogue about how to navigate the complex intersection of historical wrongs and current scientific data. The filmmakers hope this presents productive paths forward for Minden specifically, and leads to a more thoughtful and nuanced understanding of community dynamics in the thousands of other towns like Minden.

BIOS

CO-DIRECTORS



MEG GRIFFITHS Co-Director, Producer

Meg began her career as a photo and video journalist at the Houston Chronicle and then held a leadership role at Teach For America where she built the nonprofit's first video studio. After overseeing content development and digital strategy at an LA-based agency, Meg co-founded Universe Creative, a documentary production company. Meg's work has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and is supported by the International Documentary Association and Redford Center. She holds a MA in journalism from the University of Texas at Austin.



SCOTT FARIS Co-Director, Cinematographer, Editor

Scott grew up in West Virginia and attended NYU's Tisch School of the Arts before teaching 5th grade on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. After working as a video producer for various educational nonprofits, Scott co-founded Universe Creative, an LA-based doc production company, with his friend and long-time colleague, Meg Griffiths. Scott enjoys stories that challenge conventional wisdom and preconceived notions about people and places often overlooked by popular media. He is proud to have visited all fifty US states.

BIOS

PRODUCERS



BRANDON HILL Executive Producer

Brandon is Head of Unscripted at Wild State. He has worked across documentary, unscripted, and scripted television as a producer and writer, and is the recipient of a Peabody Award and an Independent Spirit Award for IMMIGRATION NATION.



JEFFREY MORRISON Associate Producer

With over 35 years in the media industry Jeffrey has dabbled in everything from television, indie film, motion pictures, print media, to radio. As a native Appalachian he's always interested in helping tell real stories that have a positive impact across the region.



ALIA MANSOORI Consulting Producer

Alia was born, bred and still growing in New York City. After studying journalism at the University of Texas at Austin, Alia wrote for numerous national and international newspapers and magazines. Later, Alia became a content strategist, telling the story of upstarts and well-known brands spanning industries from travel to fashion to food.

BIOS

CREATIVE TEAM



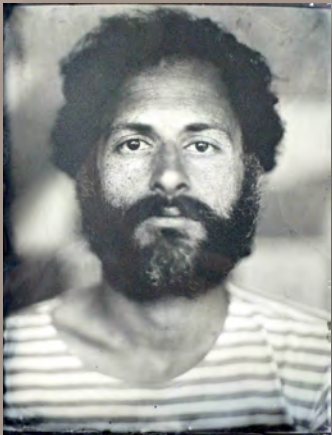
NATHAN HALPERN Composer

Nathan is an Emmy-nominated composer who has scored multiple Oscar-nominated films and been named a 'Composer to Watch' by Classic FM and Indiewire. Barack Obama has named three films he has scored as "Best Films" of that year: Chloe Zhao's Cannes award winning *THE RIDER*, Bing Liu's Oscar-nominated *MINDING THE GAP*, and John Patton Ford's *EMILY THE CRIMINAL*. Halpern scored three films that premiered at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival: *EMILY THE CRIMINAL*, Chloe Okuno's acclaimed psychological thriller *WATCHER*, and Oscar-nominated Netflix documentary *THE MARTHA MITCHELL EFFECT*.



DANIEL ROMAN Editor

Dan has extensive experience in film production and marketing, and he has made his mark working for clients like Amazon Music, PayPal, Degree and others. He is a multiple CLIO and Webby award-winning editor, and he recently released his first feature-length documentary *FOR LOVE AND COUNTRY* on Prime Video.



CHRIS RUGGERIO Composer

Chris is an Emmy-nominated composer and music producer. His work includes the scores to the Oscar-nominated *MINDING THE GAP*, Nanfu Wang's *HOOLIGAN SPARROW*, *I AM ANOTHER YOU*, and *ONE CHILD NATION*, and the celebrated PBS series *SOUNDBREAKING*. Ruggiero's compositions have appeared in over 200 television series including *The Voice*, *Pawn Stars*, and *American Pickers*.

AWARDS & PRESS

IMPOSSIBLE TOWN was filmed throughout West Virginia from 2019-2023. Co-directors Meg Griffiths and Scott Faris produced the documentary in partnership with Universe Creative and Radley Studios. The film received funding and support from the International Documentary Association, the Redford Center, Mountainfilm, From the Heart Productions, the Logan Nonfiction Fellowship, DOC NYC Industry Roundtables, the George & Fay Young Foundation, and the Estate of Elizabeth T. Dew.

ORION

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JILL TIDMAN

Impossible Town

A doctor attempts to move a community off its poisoned land

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Redford Center Funding a Record 22 Feature-Length Environmental Documentaries

The nonprofit Redford Center, co-founded by Robert and James Redford, has announced early-stage funding for 22 feature-length documentaries focusing on environmental solutions and justice.

BY **OSIN PENNER** | SEPTEMBER 29, 2020 9:00AM



James Redford at a benefit for the Redford Center in 2018. [PHOTO: MOUNTAINFILM/DAVID W. BROWN](#)



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The **Redford Center**, the nonprofit environmental media organization co-founded in 2005 by **Robert Redford** and his son James Redford, is going big on funding environmental documentaries this year. Today, it announced early-stage funding of a record 22 feature-length films committed to telling stories of environmental justice and solutions. Made through the Redford Center's biennial Grants Program, it represents a tripling of the number of films funded in its previous cycle.



MOUNTAINFILM

April 28, 2023

MOUNTAINFILM ANNOUNCES FIRST WAVE OF FILMS & WORLD PREMIERES



Early festival highlights, guest director and tribute to legend Hilaree Nelson as Mountainfilm gears up to celebrate its 45th edition

One of North America's oldest film festivals, Telluride's Mountainfilm, has announced its first wave of film titles and festival highlights. Festival-goers can look forward to more than 100 inspiring, heart-stopping and adventure-packed films as the festival takes over Telluride's majestic box canyon on Memorial Day weekend, May 25-29, 2023. Known for its intimacy and relaxed vibe (aptly named one of the [USA Today's 2023 Readers Choice Top 10 Film Festivals](#)), the festival will include 22 features and 85 shorts that tackle some of the most relevant issues of our time.

Mountainfilm 2023 will highlight more than 70 world, North American, U.S. and Colorado premieres. The world premiere of the HBO film [Trees, and Other Entanglements](#) will explore our connection to the natural world and one another. From the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua comes [Patrol](#), (Mountainfilm 2022 Commitment Grant recipient) the story of rangers, a conservationist and a journalist joining together in an attempt to protect Indigenous ancestral lands and one of the last remaining rainforests in Central America. Another Mountainfilm Commitment Grant recipient that will have its world premiere on Saturday is [Impossible Town](#), the story of deep familial obligations and environmental justice in rural West Virginia.

Oscar-winning filmmakers [Chai Vasarhelyi](#) and [Jimmy Chin](#)'s latest doc feature [Wild Life](#) follows conservationist Kris Tompkins on an epic, decades-spanning love story and visionary effort to create national parks throughout Chile and Argentina. [Chai Vasarhelyi](#), [Jimmy Chin](#) and [Kris Tompkins](#) will be in attendance with the film.

CONTACT

Click to download photos & poster

Meg Griffiths
c. 713.498.4168
e. meg@universecreative.org

Scott Faris
c. 605.828.3567
e. scott@universecreative.org

impossibletown.com | Trailer | Instagram



IMPOSSIBLE TOWN

A FATHER'S DREAM. A DAUGHTER'S DUTY.



UNIVERSE CREATIVE AND RADLEY STUDIOS PRESENT "IMPOSSIBLE TOWN"
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY SCOTT FARIS EDITED BY DANIEL ROMAN MUSIC BY NATHAN HALPERN
AND CHRIS RUGGIERO SOUND RECORDIST STEPHEN SCHMIDT JEFFREY MORRISON
COLOR BY STEPHEN DERLUGUIAN RE-RECORDING MIXER SCOTT A. JENNINGS MPSE
SOUND DESIGN SARAH KROHN PRODUCED BY MEG GRIFFITHS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER BRANDON HILL
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER JEFFREY MORRISON DIRECTED BY MEG GRIFFITHS & SCOTT FARIS

SUPPORT PROVIDED BY

ida international documentary association
Enterprise Documentary Fund



THE REDFORD CENTER

LOGAN NONFICTION PROGRAM



THE GEORGE & FAY YOUNG FOUNDATION



The Estate of
ELIZABETH T. DEW