



FILMMAKER BIOS

ALICIA SAMS

Alicia Sams has extensive production experience in both documentary and feature films. Prior to Arab American Stories, she was producer/director (with Amy Rice) of the Emmy-Award winning film BY THE PEOPLE: THE ELECTION OF BARACK OBAMA which premiered on HBO in 2009. Also in 2009, Sams was executive producer of Cherien Dabis' award-winning debut feature AMREEKA, which premiered at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival and went on to win the Critics Prize at the Director's Fortnight of the Cannes Film Festival. Sams traveled with the film to Tunisia in December 2010 as part of the Sundance Institute's Film Forward program. She is also developing the feature films PEACE LIKE A RIVER with Warner Bros and Dreamworks pictures, and CATCH THE MOON, a romantic comedy set in Gaza. Past productions include: TOOTS; WANDERLUST; GRATEFUL DAWG; HELLO HE LIED: AND OTHER TRUTHS FROM THE HOLLYWOOD TRENCHES, PRESS ON, KEEPING TIME: NEW MUSIC FROM AMERICA'S ROOTS, SUNBURN and OFF THE MENU: THE LAST DAYS OF CHASEN'S. She began her career working on documentaries for public television series AMERICAN MASTERS, GREAT PERFORMANCES and Bill Moyers' Public Affairs Television.

WARREN DAVID

Warren David is executive producer of "Arab American Stories". He is also the national president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. A third-generation Arab American of Lebanese-Syrian heritage, he has been a life-long activist in Michigan's Arab American community. He is the founder and publisher of Arab America, formerly Arab Detroit, one of the leading interactive websites in the U.S. providing digital media to the Arab American community. David was an originator of the "Images and Perceptions of Arab Americans Diversity Workshop," which has trained more than 1,500 educators, corporate employees, government officials, and media personnel about the image of the Arab and Arab American. He was the executive producer of the award winning nationally disseminated NPR radio series, "Arabesque: Insights into Arab Culture." David is the founder of David Communications, a multi-cultural public relations, marketing and advertising firm with specialization in the Arab American market.

JEFF FORSTER

Jeff Forster is the Vice President of Production and Station Enterprises for Detroit Public Television and has actively been encouraging the development of local and national Documentary programs. In the last year Detroit Public Television has produced over a dozen national pledge special and four national “how-to series” as well as 6 local weekly series and a half dozen documentaries.

Jeff has over 30 years of experience in video production. He has worked as a Director, Producer, Executive Producer and a Program Executive in commercial broadcasting, public broadcasting and corporate video. Working on productions from Brazil to Germany, he has produced all forms of programming from cultural arts presentations to sports competitions.

Jeff’s production teams have produced award winning, nationally distributed productions in the United States for both commercial and public broadcasting. Detroit Public Television is a regular contributor to the PBS program schedule.

NEDA ULABY

Neda Ulaby reports on arts, entertainment, and cultural trends for NPR’s Arts Desk.

Scouring the various and often overlapping worlds of art, music, television, film, new media and literature, Ulaby’s radio and online stories reflect political and economic realities, cultural issues, obsessions and transitions, as well as artistic adventurousness— and awesomeness.

Over the last few years, Ulaby has strengthened NPR’s television coverage both in terms of programming and industry coverage and profiled breakout artists such as Ellen Page and Skylar Grey and behind-the-scenes tastemakers ranging from super producer Timbaland to James Schamus, CEO of Focus Features. Her stories have included a series on women record producers, an investigation into exhibitions of plastinated human bodies, and a look at the legacy of gay activist Harvey Milk. Her profiles have brought listeners into the worlds of such performers as Tyler Perry, Ryan Seacrest, Mark Ruffalo, and Courtney Love.

Ulaby has earned multiple fellowships at the Getty Arts Journalism Program at USC Annenberg as well as a fellowship at the Knight Center for Specialized Journalism to study youth culture. In addition, Ulaby’s weekly podcast of NPR’s best arts stories, *Culturetopia*, won a Gracie award from the Alliance for Women in Media Foundation.

Joining NPR in 2000, Ulaby was recruited through NPR’s Next Generation Radio, and landed a temporary position on the cultural desk as an editorial assistant. She started reporting regularly, augmenting her work with arts coverage for D.C.’s Washington City Paper.

Before coming to NPR, Ulaby worked as managing editor of Chicago’s Windy City Times and co-hosted a local radio program, What’s Coming Out at the Movies. Her film reviews and academic

articles have been published across the country and internationally. For a time, she edited fiction for The Chicago Review and served on the editing staff of the leading academic journal Critical Inquiry. Ulaby taught classes in the humanities at the University of Chicago, Northeastern Illinois University and at high schools serving at-risk students.

A former doctoral student in English literature, Ulaby worked as an intern for the features desk of the Topeka Capital-Journal after graduating from Bryn Mawr College. She was born in Amman, Jordan, and grew up in the idyllic Midwestern college towns of Lawrence, Kansas and Ann Arbor, Michigan.

OMAR AL-CHAAR (Omar@KNOAproductions.com)

Producer/Director of Rahim Alhaj, Elias Zerhouni and Nawar and Kareem Shora segments

Omar Al-Chaar is co-founder and President of KNOA Productions, Inc. He serves as an independent producer, director and cinematographer to a range of clients seeking high-quality, deadline-conscious expertise in producing professional music videos, commercials, political ads, television shows, documentaries and short films.

Omar is experienced in creating an array of production options for his clients, which have included such corporate and network accounts as Pepsico and The Discovery Channel in addition to such government and nonprofit accounts as The White House and Women's Eastern Baseball League. Omar's extensive knowledge of all aspects of film production permits KNOA to ensure that its productions are completed on deadline and within budget. He enjoys a professional reputation for extraordinary reliability, exceeding client expectations, and personal commitment to filmmaking excellence.

An American of Arab descent, Omar Al-Chaar found great professional and personal satisfaction in helping to bring Arab American Stories to the Detroit Public Television audience.

USAMA ALSHAIBI

Producer/Director of Imam Taha Tawil and Frederique Boudouani segments

Usama Alshaibi was born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1969 and spent his formative years living between the United States and the Middle East. His work in film and video has been screened at numerous film festivals and venues across the globe. In early 2004 Usama and his wife returned to his birthplace in Iraq to shoot his first feature documentary titled Nice Bombs. The documentary had a theatrical release in 2007 and a broadcast premiere on the Sundance Channel in March 2008. Usama has completed more than forty short films that are on various international DVD compilations. His films have screened at such places as Anthology Film Center in New York and The Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago. He has also produced and directed music videos for a variety of musicians and record labels. In addition to reaching an eclectic audience with his film work, Alshaibi's photography and art have been included in various gallery exhibitions and web publications. An interview with Usama appears in Studs Terkel's book Hope Dies Last and his films have been included in Jack Sargeant's book

Deathtripping: The Extreme Underground. Feature articles have been written about his work in such places as the Chicago Tribune, Time Out, and Variety.

Alshaibi's films have received several grants, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation award, an award from the Creative Capital Foundation for the Arts and a Playboy Foundation award. He is also the winner of the Creative Promise award at Tribeca All Access in New York City. Currently Alshaibi just completed his latest narrative feature titled Profane and working on a documentary on Arab-Americans under a diversity fellowship at Kartemquin Films.

NELSON HUME

Producer/Director of Ali El Sayed and Robby Ameen segments

Nelson Hume is a Director/D.P. living in Brooklyn, New York. Nelson was planning a career in studio art when the New York independent film scene exploded in the mid 80's. Inspired, he enrolled at NYU Graduate School of Film and Television where he won the Johnson Fellowship Award. Directing credits include the feature film, SUNBURN, starring Cillian Murphy which received its premier at the Toronto Film Festival, as well as documentary films for PBS, Bravo and The Museum of the City of New York. Nelson has also directed films for Ogilvy & Mather, Polygram, 7th on 6th/CFDA and the Columbia Business School. As Director of Photography Nelson has shot several award winning documentaries including, "ReGeneration", "Somewhere Between", "Glorious Sky, Herbert Katzman's New York", "Finding North", "The World According to Sesame Street", "By The People, The Election of Barack Obama", "Smash His Camera" and "My Kid Could Paint That". Television credits include, "Little People Big World", "Gangland" and "American Wasteland". He has also shot commercials for Macy's, Anheuser-Busch, and numerous corporate films for IBM.

JULIA KING

Producer/Director of Rabih Dow, Judy Habib and Alicia Erian segments

Julia King works in documentary and narrative films. She is Executive Producer of the narrative film HERE starring Ben Foster and Lubna Azabal that premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival and is currently in theatrical release and she associate-produced AMERICAN SPLENDOR in association with HBO films starring Paul Giamatti which won the 2003 Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival. Julia produced several feature-length documentaries for the directors Robert Pulcini and Shari Springer Berman including THE YOUNG AND THE DEAD, a portrait of a Los Angeles cemetery and its youthful owner for HBO; HELLO HE LIED, AND OTHER TRUTHS FROM THE HOLLYWOOD TRENCHES, a lighthearted, yet in-depth look at producers working in Hollywood for AMC; and WANDERLUST about the history of road movies in American Cinema for IFC. Julia has also served as a production consultant for several documentaries including the series THE ALZHEIMER'S PROJECT for HBO, the feature-length documentary AFRICA UNITE directed by Stephanie Black and produced by Danny Glover and STILL THE CHILDREN ARE HERE directed by Dinaz Stafford and produced by Mira Nair. Julia is currently completing her

documentary FORK AND SPADE, which follows a group of refugee farmers through their first growing season as independent sustainable farmers on a historic New England farm.

JOAN MANDELL

Producer/Director of Maha Freij and Mariem Masmoudi segments

Joan Mandell is a Detroit-based journalist and documentary filmmaker. Her documentaries include: Tales from Arab Detroit; Voices in Exile: Immigrants and the First Amendment; and Gaza Ghetto: Portrait of a Palestinian Family. Currently, she is a guest curator at the Arab American National Museum and filming a documentary on Detroit area beekeepers.

MYLENE MORENO

Producer/Director of Huguette Caland, Amir Abo-Shaeer, Khalil Kaid and Alia Shawkat segments

Los Angeles-based filmmaker Mylène Moreno makes documentaries that reflect her diverse cultural interests. Fanáticos features Mexican fútbol fanáticos in Los Angeles and was supported by a Media Arts Fellowship and included in the 2007 Tribeca All Access program. Her previous work, Recalling Orange County, is a personal look at the orchestrated backlash against an immigrant rights leader that revealed fierce conflicts in California's Orange County over what it means to be American. It began airing in October, 2006, during the inaugural season of the Latino Public Broadcasting series VOCES. True-Hearted Vixens featured female jocks pursuing dreams of professional athletic greatness in a startup tackle football league. Produced in association with the Independent Television Service, Vixens aired during the 2001 season of P.O.V. Previously, she worked in Austin on several PBS documentaries, producing the first episode of the landmark PBS series ¡CHICANO! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement. She also produced a tongue-in-cheek documentary "search" for the brilliant and reclusive novelist Cormac McCarthy, Cormac's Trash, and directed Maribel, a short about an El Paso teen's experience of motherhood, marriage and a second pregnancy. Mylène is a graduate of Stanford University's documentary film program.

JULYE NEWLIN

Producer/Director of Abercias segment

From the moment I saw my first film crew I was hooked on the synergy of human interaction, cinematography, and sound recording in the tapestry of a story. I love just about every aspect of this job, and I am constantly reminded of the beauty of the human spirit each time I see that synergy come together in the viewfinder. Many crews call me a working producer/director because I am aware of the technical skills required to do each of their jobs and I am more than willing to use those skills. My company slogan is "passion, people, and persistence." I try to work tirelessly to provide the customers of Julye Newlin Productions, Inc., with the excellent customer service. I have an international list of clientele in aeronautics, space, medicine, energy production, communications, construction, and media. I specialize in small, effective, teams that provide turnkey services in difficult environments.

JACKIE SALLOUM

Producer/Director of Linda Sarsour, Moose Scheib, Malika Zarra and Rami Kashou segments

Jacqueline Reem Salloum is a New York based artist and filmmaker. During her MFA studies at New York University she created one of her first shorts, "Planet of the Arabs", (2005 Sundance) which marked the beginning of her love for filmmaking. After graduating she began directing her first feature length documentary, "Slingshot Hip Hop", which premiered at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. She recently directed a music video for UN Women, "Law Arja Bil Zaman", and a short kids film, "Yala to the Moon", which is an official selection at the 2012 TIFF Kids International Film Festival. Salloum continues to write/direct films, music videos and guest mentors workshops at the Doha Film Institute, universities and other programs.

ALICIA SAMS

Producer/Director of Diane Rehm, Hassan Faraj, Mahmoud Traina, Kamil Al-Faqih, Brian and Leon Dewan, Omar Offendum, Adnan Charara, Mike Abdeen and Sherif Morsi, Aliya Suayah, Mounira Charrad, Hanan Al-Attar, Najla Said and Ferial Masry segments

Alicia Sams has extensive production experience in both documentary and feature films. She is currently producer of ARAB AMERICAN STORIES, a 13-episode PBS series to be broadcast in 2012. Her most recent film as producer/director (with Amy Rice) is the Emmy-Award winning film BY THE PEOPLE: THE ELECTION OF BARACK OBAMA which premiered on HBO in 2009. Also in 2009, Sams was executive producer of Cherien Dabis' award-winning debut feature AMREEKA, which premiered at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival and went on to win the Critics Prize at the Director's Fortnight of the Cannes Film Festival. Sams traveled with the film to Tunisia in December 2010 as part of the Sundance Institute's Film Forward program. She is also developing the feature film PEACE LIKE A RIVER with Warner Bros and Dreamworks pictures. Other productions include: TOOTS; WANDERLUST; GRATEFUL DAWG; HELLO HE LIED: AND OTHER TRUTHS FROM THE HOLLYWOOD TRENCHES, PRESS ON, KEEPING TIME: NEW MUSIC FROM AMERICA'S ROOTS, SUNBURN and OFF THE MENU: THE LAST DAYS OF CHASEN'S.

ANDREA TORRICE

Producer/Director of Fahid Daoud segment

Andrea Torrice is an award-winning documentary and public television producer whose work spans a range of contemporary issues. Her latest production, The New Metropolis, explores the revitalization challenges and opportunities facing America's older, first suburbs. Currently airing on public television, she is also overseeing the related civic engagement dialogues being hosted by PBS affiliated stations. Her PBS documentary, Rising Waters, which examines the global warming debate through the personal stories of Pacific Islanders, was featured at the 2004 United Nation's Earth Summit, as well as broadcast in 110 countries and on National Geographic TV. She was the segment producer for Election Day. Some of her films include: Bad Chemistry, which discloses the hazards of low-level chemical exposures on human health; Large Dams, False Promises, which investigates the impacts of dam projects in Brazil and China; and Forsaken Cries: The Story of Rwanda, which delves into the historical factors contributing to the

1994 genocide. Winner of many festival awards for her programs, she is also the recipient of a Corporation for Public Broadcasting Gold Award for Community Programming.

KELLY WHALEN

Producer/Director of Imad Mahawili segment

Kelly Whalen is an independent multimedia journalist based in Oakland, California. Her documentaries have broadcast nationally on MSNBC and PBS, including her Emmy-nominated film "Tulia, Texas," which brought to light racial injustices in America's "war on drugs." In addition to her work covering the criminal justice system, Kelly has extensive experience documenting the impact of violence on communities. She is a contributing producer to the ongoing PBS series, "Not In Our Town," featuring community responses to hate crimes and efforts to build more inclusive communities. She recently produced and edited a series of webisodes adapted from the PBS film "Welcome to Shelbyville," about rapid demographic change and a unique approach to immigration integration in a small town in Tennessee. Kelly is a graduate of the U.C. Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, a past fellow of the International Reporting Project at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, and of the New York Times Changing Face of America fellowship at the University of California at Berkeley.

SARAH ZIENTARSKI (SarahZ194@aol.com)

Producer/Director of Nawal Motawi, Father George Shalhoub and Abdul "Ace" Montaser segments

Sarah has worked with ESPN, Fox Sports Detroit and Detroit Public Television since beginning in the television business in 2006. She worked as a production assistant on television projects for the Belmont and Saratoga Stakes, College Football, World Cup and X-Games and produced, edited and created features for the series Tigers Weekly and game packages for Detroit Red Wings and Central Collegiate Hockey Association games. She served as associate producer at Detroit Public Television on the series "Making the Music with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra," and co-produced "Riley Skate Park: Taking it Off the Streets," documentary "Great Teachers," health show "Vital Signs," and the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion's Humanitarian Awards video in 2009 and 2011. She served as Associate Producer on the documentaries Blue Ice: The Story of Michigan Hockey; John F. Kennedy and Peace Corps documentary A Passing of the Torch; and diesel fuel documentary Clear the Air.

SAMEH ZOABI

Producer/Director of Dean Obeidallah segment

Sameh Zoabi was born and raised in Iksal, a Palestinian village near the city of Nazareth, Israel in 1975. In 1998, Zoabi graduated from Tel Aviv University with a dual degree in Film Studies and English Literature. The following year, Zoabi was awarded a merit scholarship to pursue a Master's Degree. In February 2005, he completed his M.F.A. in Film Direction at Columbia's School of the Arts. Zoabi's previous short film "Be Quiet" (19 min.) is an international award

winning film, including the Third Prize at the Cinefondation Selection at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival. Filmmaker Magazine named Zoabi as one of the Top 25 New Faces of Independent Cinema. Zoabi's feature film debut, *Man Without a Cellphone*, is the winner of the Golden Antigone at the 2011 Montpellier film festival. The film has been showing in many prestigious international film festivals including New Directors/New Films in New York, Karlovy Vary, Tribeca Doha Film Festival, Chicago and Palm Springs.