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**(T)ERROR Premieres on *Independent Lens*
Monday, February 22, 2016 on PBS**

The First Film Ever to Capture an FBI Sting as It Unfolds



Credit: *Stories Seldom Seen LLC*

(San Francisco, CA) — Winner of a 2015 Sundance Film Festival Special Jury Prize, **(T)ERROR** is the first documentary to place filmmakers on the ground during an active FBI counterterrorism sting operation. Unfolding with the drama and intrigue of a spy novel, **(T)ERROR** is the story of “Shariff,” a 63-year-old Black revolutionary turned informant, whose perspective provides an unfettered glimpse of the government’s counterterrorism tactics and the sometimes murky justifications behind them. A portrait of a troubled man whose double life has extracted a heavy toll, the film raises questions about the balance between civil liberties and national security. Directed by Lyric R. Cabral and

David Felix Sutcliffe, **(T)ERROR** premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, February 22, 2016, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

The film begins in an undisclosed location in the eastern United States, where Shariff works as a cook in a middle school cafeteria, but is struggling to make ends meet. When the FBI asks him to work on a terrorism investigation in Pittsburgh, Shariff reluctantly leaves his young son behind for what he hopes will be his last case, and a chance to make several hundred thousand dollars.

Upon arrival in Pittsburgh, Shariff informs the filmmakers that the FBI has ordered him to befriend a white Muslim convert named Khalifah Al-Akili, and assess his interest in attending a terrorist training camp abroad. As his investigation of Khalifah unfolds, a parallel examination of Shariff begins as well. Uncovering a complex web of greed, betrayal and regret, **(T)ERROR** reveals the origins and evolution of Shariff’s complicated past.

As times goes by, Shariff finds himself under increasing pressure from the FBI to produce results in the Al-Akili case. Midway through the film, a dramatic discovery upends the investigation and raises serious questions about the ethics and effectiveness of the FBI’s tactics. Taut, stark, and controversial, **(T)ERROR** illuminates the fragile relationships between individuals and the surveillance state in modern America, and asks: Who is watching the watchers?

Filmmaker Lyric Cabral has an extremely personal connection to **(T)ERROR**. She has known the



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main character for over a decade and is one of the few people to maintain contact with him over the span of several counterterrorism assignments. When she met co-director David Felix Sutcliffe, who had made a previous film about an FBI arrest of one of his former students, she disclosed her friendship with Shariff. The filmmakers decided to approach him with the idea of documenting his activities. *(T)ERROR* was set in motion when Shariff invited Cabral and Sutcliffe to his home to discuss the idea.

Visit the *(T)ERROR* page on [Independent Lens](#), which features more information about the film.

About the Filmmakers

Lyric R. Cabral (Director, Producer, Cinematographer) is a New York-based filmmaker and photojournalist who documents stories seldom seen in mainstream media. In support of her verité work, Cabral has received artist grants from BBC Storyville, the Tribeca Film Institute, the Sundance Institute, the Independent Television Service (ITVS), NYSCA, the International Documentary Association, and the W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund. *(T)ERROR* premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival, where it won a Special Jury Prize for Break Out First Feature. Cabral and Sutcliffe were honored by the International Documentary Association with the 2015 Emerging Filmmaker Award. *(T)ERROR* was also a recipient of the 2013 Garrett Scott Documentary Development Grant, awarded by the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. In 2013, *Filmmaker Magazine* named Cabral one of the “25 New Faces of Independent Film.” Her photography has been recently published through Aperture Foundation, National Geographic Channel UK, *The Nation*, and *The Village Voice*, and is currently on exhibition with “Gordon Parks: The Making of an Argument.”

David Felix Sutcliffe (Director, Producer, Cinematographer) is a Sundance Film Festival award-winning documentary filmmaker. In 2013, he was included in *Filmmaker Magazine's* annual list of “25 New Faces of Independent Film.” His first film, *Adama* (WORLD Channel, 2011), explores the story of a 16-year-old Muslim girl growing up in Harlem who was arrested by the FBI on suspicion of being a “potential suicide bomber.” *(T)ERROR*, his feature-length documentary debut, premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival where it won a Special Jury Prize for Break Out First Feature. Sutcliffe and Cabral were honored by the International Documentary Association with the 2015 Emerging Filmmaker Award. In 2014, he was selected as a fellow for the Sundance Institute's Edit and Story Lab, as well as their Creative Producing Lab. His work as a filmmaker has been funded by the BBC, the NEA, the Tribeca Film Institute, the Sundance Institute, and ITVS.

Christopher St. John (Producer) is a producer and journalist with broad experience in print, broadcast and documentary film. He began his career in production at ABC News, working for *Good Morning America* before moving to the news magazine division, where he contributed extensively to *20/20* and *Primetime*. Prior to producing *(T)ERROR*, he produced *The House I Live In* (BBC/ITVS), which won the 2012 Sundance Grand Jury Prize, received wide theatrical release in the fall of 2012, and premiered on *Independent Lens* in 2013. Christopher also co-produced





Freakonomics (Magnolia, 2010) and the Emmy Award-winning *Reagan* (HBO, 2011). Prior to entering production, he served as a regional correspondent in Southeast Asia for a number of US and international publications.

CREDITS

Produced and Directed by	Lyric R. Cabral and David Felix Sutcliffe
Producer	Christopher St. John
Executive Producers	Eugene Jarecki Nick Fraser Sally Jo Fifer Lois Vossen
Co-Producer	Shirel Kozak
Editors	Nyneve Laura Minnear Jean-Phillppe Boucicaut
Music	Robert Miller
Directors of Photography	Lyric R. Cabral David Felix Sutcliffe

(T)ERROR is a co-production of Stories Seldom Seen LLC, Charlotte Street Films, and Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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