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## OSCAR®-NOMINATED DOCUMENTARY “WRITING WITH FIRE” MAKES ITS TELEVISION DEBUT ON PBS’S INDEPENDENT LENS ON MARCH 28, 2022

*Film Turns a Lens on India’s Only All-Female News Outlet in Male-Dominated Media Landscape*

(San Francisco, CA) February 15, 2022— Fresh off its Academy Award®-nomination earlier this month, Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh’s “Writing With Fire” will make its television debut on PBS’s INDEPENDENT LENS on March 28, 2022, at 10:00 p.m. ET ([check local listings](#)). The film will also be available to stream on the PBS Video app.

“Writing With Fire” has been lauded as “a rousing, inspirational tribute to the pride of grassroots Indian journalism” by *Variety* and “the most inspiring journalism movie—maybe ever” by the *Washington Post*, and also named a *New York Times* Critic’s Pick. Its INDEPENDENT LENS premiere comes the day after the 94<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards® on Sunday, March 27, 2022 for which it has been nominated in the Best Documentary Feature category.

In the midst of a crowded, patriarchal news landscape, the reporters with *Khabar Lahariya*—India’s only newspaper run by Dalit (“low caste”) women—take it upon themselves to cover their country’s inequities with unflinching determination. Armed only with their smartphones, these fearless journalists traverse the state of Uttar Pradesh, exposing government misconduct, rape culture, and rampant corruption that victimizes those without voice or power. Led by chief reporter Meera Devi, they investigate the incompetence of the local police force, listen to and stand by victims of caste and gender violence, and challenge long-standing, harmful practices that lead to injustice and intimidation.

“Writing With Fire” follows this ambitious group of Dalit women, focusing on staff reporters Suneeta Prajapati and Shyamkali Devi, in addition to Meera Devi, as they transition from print to digital in order to stay relevant, and learn to harness the power of online media to grow their audience far beyond the confines of their social standing. Filmmakers Thomas and Ghosh journey with the women as they travel around rural India to report on abuses of patriarchy and government malfeasance, their efforts taking them into people’s homes, police offices, the frontlines of major government elections, and more.



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Eye-opening and compelling, “Writing With Fire” highlights what it means to truly challenge traditional notions of power and redefine what it means to be powerful. The film, which was five years in the making, marks the feature debut of both Thomas and Ghosh.

“In our filmmaking, we’ve always been drawn to the stories of those who are marginalized by an unjust system but who forge on, regardless, to change their lives and the lives of those around them,” said Rintu Thomas. “In the journalists of *Khabar Lahariya*, we found an incredible story of women taking on huge personal risks every day in pursuit of truth, justice, and real change, driven by their deep belief in the mission and purpose behind what they do. This is a journalism documentary, but at its heart is a story about courage and hope and women who are changing the world in their own unique ways.”

Added Sushmit Ghosh, “The *Khabar Lahariya* newspaper is a lens through which we delve deeper into exploring some of the most pressing, complex societal issues facing India’s society today. Gender and class inequality, rape, political corruption—these are all huge issues, but by following the journalists as they reported on these stories, we were able to take a more intimate approach to talking about and highlighting the extent of systemic injustice in the country.”

“Writing With Fire” had its world premiere at Sundance Film Festival in 2021, where it was a double award winner, scooping up both the World Cinema Audience Award and Special Jury Award: Impact for Change. The film was a favorite on the festival circuit, picking up additional awards at San Francisco Film Festival, Seattle International Film Festival, Telluride Mountainfilm Festival, Washington D.C. Filmfest, Belfast Film Festival, International Human Rights Film Festival, and more.

In addition to its recent Academy Award® nomination for Best Documentary Feature, “Writing With Fire” was also nominated for the Producers Guild of America Awards for outstanding producer of documentary motion pictures, and was named to the IDA Shortlist for best feature documentary.

Visit [pbs.org/writingwithfire](https://pbs.org/writingwithfire) on INDEPENDENT LENS for more information about the film.

#### **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:**

##### **Rintu Thomas** (Co-Director/Producer)

Rintu Thomas is an award-winning director-producer from India whose work is supported by the Sundance Institute, Chicken & Egg Pictures, IDFA, SFF Film Fund, Doc Society, and Bertha Foundation, among others. A 2021 IDA Courage Under Fire Award honoree, Rintu is also an IDA Logan Elevate grantee and a Sundance Fellow.

Her debut feature documentary, “Writing With Fire,” won two awards at Sundance ’21 (Audience Award and Special Jury Award: Impact for Change). Described by *The Washington Post* as “the most inspiring journalism movie—maybe ever,” “Writing With Fire” has played at over 100 festivals and won 28 international awards. The film is also a *New York Times* Critic’s Pick.

Over the last 10 years, Thomas’s films have been used as advocacy tools for social impact, included in the curriculum of universities, and exhibited globally in spaces such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference and The Lincoln Center for Performing Arts—becoming catalysts for new conversations. She lives between New Delhi and a quaint mountain-town in North India.

#### **Sushmit Ghosh** (Co-Director/Producer)

Sushmit Ghosh is an award-winning director and cinematographer from India whose work has been supported by the Sundance Institute, Tribeca Institute, Doc Society, SFF Film Fund, IDFA, Bertha Foundation, Sorfond, and the Finnish Film Foundation, among others. Ghosh is a 2021 IDA Courage Under Fire Award honoree and a Sundance Fellow.

Five years in the making, Ghosh’s debut feature documentary, “Writing With Fire” is a double Sundance award winner. Hailed by *IndieWire* as “profound,” and “insightful and inspirational” by *The Hollywood Reporter*, the film has been a festival favorite winning 28 awards, including 10 best documentary awards.

In 2009, Ghosh co-founded Black Ticket Films, a production company invested in the power of storytelling. With a strong eye on social justice stories, Black Ticket Films’ award-winning slate of films are being used as advocacy, impact, and education tools by institutions across the world. In his spare time, you’ll find Ghosh motorcycling and hiking through the Himalayas.

#### **CREDITS:**

Directed by	Rintu Thomas
	Sushmit Ghosh
Produced by	Rintu Thomas



Executive Producers Sally Jo Fifer

Lois Vossen

**ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS:**

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. ET. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit [pbs.org/independentlens](http://pbs.org/independentlens). Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

**ABOUT ITVS:**

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films, and then airs them for free on PBS via our weekly series, INDEPENDENT LENS, as well as on other PBS series, and through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The National Endowment for the Humanities: American Rescue Plan, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit [itvs.org](http://itvs.org).

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