



impact report  
2018-2020

jewish film institute



expanding  
evolving  
reframing  
the jewish story



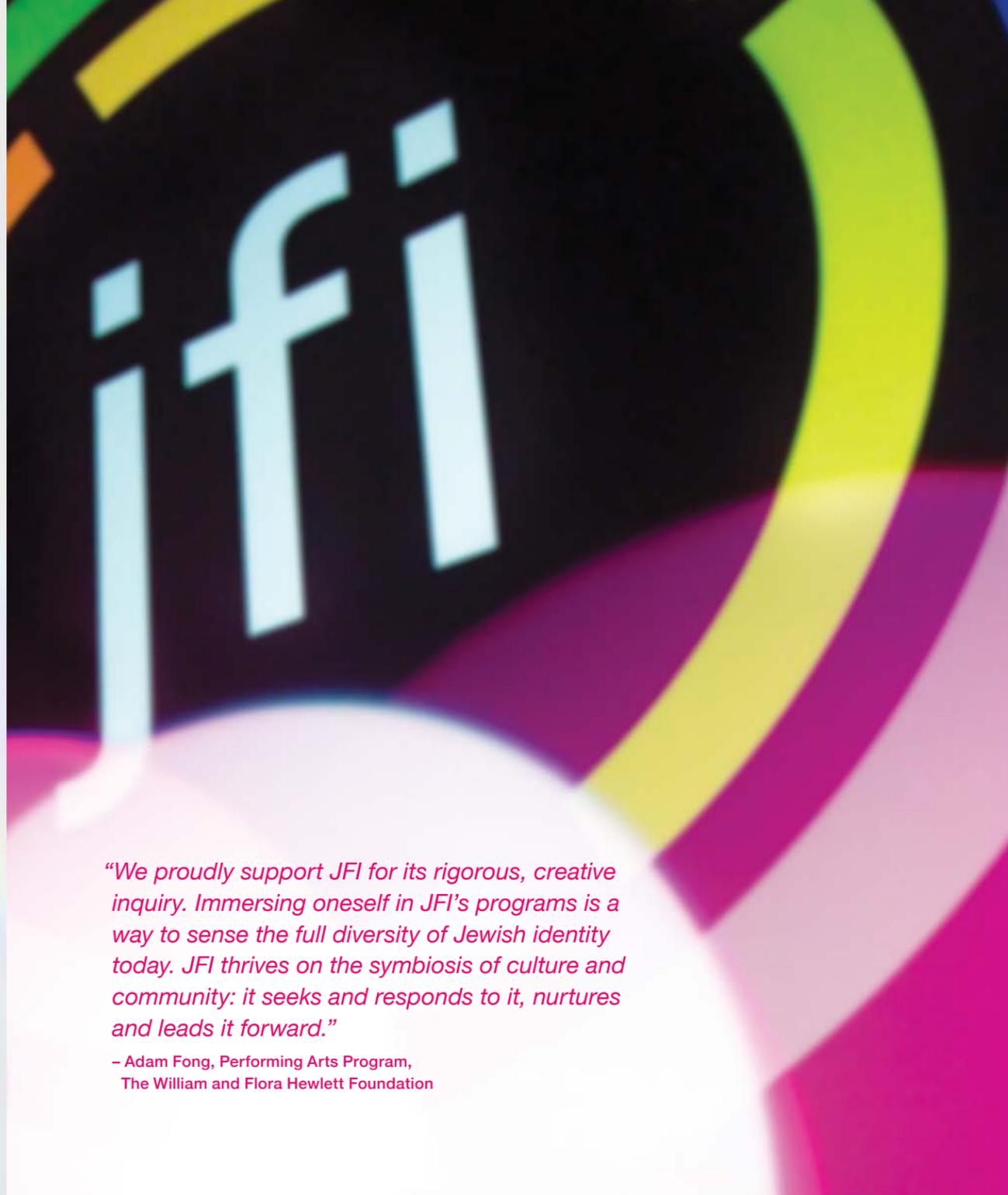


jewish film institute

The Jewish Film Institute (JFI) is the premier curatorial voice for Jewish film and media. Founded 40 years ago as the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, JFI's exhibition programs now reach audiences around the globe. JFI's pioneering filmmaker services are the only such supports for filmmakers specifically working with Jewish content.

## mission

The Jewish Film Institute inspires communities in San Francisco and around the world to expand their understanding of Jewish life through film, media and dialogue.



*“We proudly support JFI for its rigorous, creative inquiry. Immersing oneself in JFI’s programs is a way to sense the full diversity of Jewish identity today. JFI thrives on the symbiosis of culture and community: it seeks and responds to it, nurtures and leads it forward.”*

– Adam Fong, Performing Arts Program,  
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

## dear friends,

**JFI champions bold films and filmmakers that expand, evolve and reframe the Jewish story—how we tell and see it, understand and experience it.** Films have the power to engage and entertain us, bring new insights into focus, catalyze conversations and spark action. As we navigate another year of a pandemic that has transformed everything, storytelling, art-making and film are vitally important. While we haven't been able to gather together in theaters, we have extended our reach online, bringing our curatorial expertise and filmmaker support to ever-expanding communities across the country and around the globe.

We are proud to share JFI's first-ever Impact Report covering our activities from 2018 to 2020. With your support, we've accomplished so much: reaching a global audience of over 3 million, diversifying our work, providing new funding and mentorship for film projects, and building community through film. We have redoubled our efforts to make visible a broader range of Jewish experiences, representations and perspectives that reflect an evolving understanding of Jewish life. Over the past three years, JFI has grown more fully into our identity as an institute of film and media and an incubator of new ideas.

In 2020, JFI celebrated the 40th anniversary of our founding as the first Jewish film festival in the world. We are grateful to our family of supporters whose dedication and generosity has enabled us to grow and develop, building on the legacy of our founders, and ensure that the highest caliber Jewish content films will continue to be made, watched, shared and treasured. Thank you for joining us in theaters and living rooms, community spaces and conversations.

We are energized and hopeful as we look to our next chapter championing bold films and filmmakers that power and unfold the Jewish story.

We hope you will continue joining us on that journey.

With gratitude,

Lexi Leban,  
Executive Director

Sandee Blechman,  
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The ecosystem of filmmaking/filmgoing culture and story is at the center of all we do.

# powering storytellers

*“JFI has been beyond helpful with all aspects of my film, from fundraising to rough cut feedback, and providing connection to the wider JFI community.”*

– Theo Rigby,  
Filmmaker in Residence

*“I am so grateful for all the support JFI has given me over the years and for building such an incredible community. I honestly can’t imagine being a filmmaker without JFI.”*

– Sari Gilman,  
Filmmaker in Residence

JFI broadened our continuum of support for emerging and established filmmakers from 2018-2020. Our commitment to deepen the nuance and complexity of Jewish narratives led us to launch the **JFI COMPLETION GRANTS PROGRAM**, the first and only U.S.-based finish-line funding stream for Jewish-content films of all genres. This move was an important addition to the independent film community and vital to the Jewish arts and culture landscape. The program supports original stories that promote thoughtful consideration of Jewish history, life, culture and identity. Priorities are given to projects that offer fresh, challenging perspectives; reflect untold stories or under-represented communities; and engage audiences across cultural lines. In 2020, JFI awarded six inaugural completion grants totaling \$75,000 and will scale up to \$100,000 in 2021. Five of the six films have already been completed and three had their debuts in leading festivals, including Doc Aviv, Doc NYC and JFI. JFI’s **FILMMAKER RESIDENCY**, first launched in 2014, provides creative, marketing and production support for filmmakers in residence who are in various stages of their projects. The Residency provides Bay Area filmmakers with artist spaces and access to the screening room at our Ninth Street Independent Film Center. During the pandemic, we expanded our cohort to eight diverse filmmakers from the East Coast to the West, including some new to filmmaking, and continued the program on Zoom.



**\$75K in first-ever completion grants**  
**6 films supported**  
**5 premiered at leading festivals & won awards**  
**\$100K to be awarded in 2021**



Top: Completion Grant Awardees: *TIL KINGDOM COME*, *THE BINDING OF ITZIK* and *THE WILD ONE*—the inaugural recipient of the Albert and Judith Goldberg Award  
 Bottom: Cinegogue Summer Days Closing Night Awards Ceremony



*“The JFI grant gives you much more than just money, it gives you a morale boost.”*

– Tessa Louise Salomé,  
Director, *THE WILD ONE*

*“We felt urgency to get this film out...it was so timely and relevant that JFI’s grant helped us move it forward”*

– Nancy Buirski,  
Director, *CRIME ON THE BAYOU*



# moving audiences

*“JFI presented a stunning collection of films! I cannot rave enough about how much I enjoyed them. I learned a lot too like I obtained a master’s degree in Jewish culture.”*

– Audience Member

*“I loved the diversity of points of view: Palestinian, Latin American, American, Orthodox, irreverent...”*

– Audience Member

*“From the debates on screen and among the audience, I’ve learned much more about the viewpoints of people I disagree with and found many of my own belief’s challenged.”*

– Audience Member

## JFI expanded to reach and move more audiences across the world than ever before.

Our online programs brought Jewish-content films and panels to audiences in 65 countries across five continents, including those who have little direct access to Jewish film and culture. During 2018 and 2019, JFI programs welcomed more than 60 filmmakers and guests from around the world to a spirited audience of over 40,000 in theaters throughout the Bay Area. We commissioned original scores to newly restored silent films such as *THE CITY WITHOUT JEWS* and *BROKEN BARRIERS*, attracting new audiences—Jewish and non-Jewish alike. With more than 3 million views on the web and over 75K views on Facebook alone, JFI drew more than 1 million new viewers between 2018-2020, due, in part to the rapid expansion of our online programs during the pandemic. In 2020, JFI hosted not one but two full festivals, offering a hybrid of drive-in and on-line experiences. An audience of 36,000 tuned in for four **CINEGOGUE SUMMER DAYS** that were free for all. Our rebooted **40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION** during Hanukkah offered up eight days of films and brought us together in community. JFI will carry forward the silver linings from 2020, continuing hybrid programming as we transition back into theaters again soon.

Top: SFJFF Premiere at Fort Mason Flix Drive-In

Bottom: Former Vice President Al Gore at Take Action Day SFJFF

Opposite: Post-film conversation at Spark Arts, Norman Lear receives Freedom of Expression Award SFJFF, Sascha Jacobsen and the Musical Art Quintet perform live score with silent film *THE CITY WITHOUT JEWS*



- Reached 3M+ audience in 65 countries on 6 continents
- 75K Facebook viewers
- 14K Cinegogue blog viewers
- 40K+ audience each year at annual SFJFF
- 36K viewers for first JFI online summer film festival



# catalyzing collaboration

*“We at Center for Asian American Media are proud equity partners in the Ninth Street Independent Film Center along with JFI and Frameline. It is a permanent home for our organizations and an essential group of media and cultural tenants.”*

– Stephen Gong, Executive Director, CAAM

JFI’s collaborations with the film industry and major cultural institutions enable us to bring the best work back home to the Bay Area and our audiences across the world. In partnership with the **Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences**, SFJFF was named the first Jewish film festival anywhere to become an Academy Award® qualifier in the Best Documentary (Short Subject) category. In 2018, we became an official partner of the **Sundance Film Festival**, presenting an annual panel discussion tied to a World Premiere screening. In a new partnership with the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**, we presented *HOLY SILENCE*, examining the role of the Vatican during the Holocaust. JFI’s programming team has grown our presence at leading festivals across the world, including **Berlinale**, **SXSW**, **Toronto** and **Tribeca**. In our Bay Area home, JFI co-owns the **Ninth Street Independent Film Center**, a creative hub for filmmakers and film organizations, along with the **Center for Asian American Media** and **Frameline**. Our Ninth Street partnership enables cross-cultural collaborations centered on shared experiences. Among JFI’s newest community partners is the **Museum of the African Diaspora**. We teamed up in 2018 to present *SAMMY DAVIS, JR.: I’VE GOTTA BE ME* as SFJFF38’s Closing Night selection. Each new connection has been vital to expanding JFI’s audience and brought new depth, complexity and nuance to our work.

**Official Sundance  
Festival partner  
since 2018**

**Academy Award  
Qualifying Festival  
since 2018**



Opposite: JFI with partners at Sundance Film Festival

Top: The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, The Museum of the African Diaspora

Bottom: Our home at the Ninth Street Independent Film Center, ODC Dance

# cultivating community



JFI's heart is in community—exploring and celebrating the full spectrum of Jewish culture and identity is central to all of our work. Through 40-years of expert curation, exhibition of and support for innovative films and filmmakers, we cultivate community and catalyze conversations that uplift the multicultural, multiracial nature of our global Jewish communities. JFI hosted more than 250 unique events 2018-2020, using each to explode the myth of a monolithic Jewish story and provide lively ways for audiences to connect. Our annual JFI **TAKE ACTION DAY** at the SFJFF, embodies the Jewish tradition of Tikkun Olam (“repairing the world”) showcasing films that address timely and important social justice issues. Our **MITZVAH PROGRAM** is an important cornerstone of JFI's community engagement: through it, we bring new and archival films to individuals incarcerated at **San Quentin State Prison** and less-mobile senior communities across the Bay Area. Each year we work with over 150 community partners who collaborate on programs and events to bring their constituencies into the conversation and JFI community. In 2020, adapting for Covid, our online interviews and discussions have included closed captioning and sign language interpretation in order to make these programs more accessible to all.

**250+ screenings and events**  
**34 Mitzvah Program presentations in senior communities and at San Quentin State Prison**



*“The Mitzvah Series has been a real gift to our community! Many of the Rhoda Goldman Plaza Residents are not able to go out to movies or have the ability to see what is happening in the Jewish community and within Jewish film. These screenings keep them active and engaged. We are thankful for the diversity of films you show us and the discussions they encourage as well. Thank You!”*

– Alisa Berkowitz, Former Director of Therapeutic Programming, Rhoda Goldman Plaza



Opposite: Partiers at Shabbat 2019, JFI at San Quentin State Prison

Top: Senior screening at Rhoda Goldman Plaza

Bottom: Ilana Kaufman, Executive Director of Jews of Color Initiative, welcoming international guests at Shabbat 2018

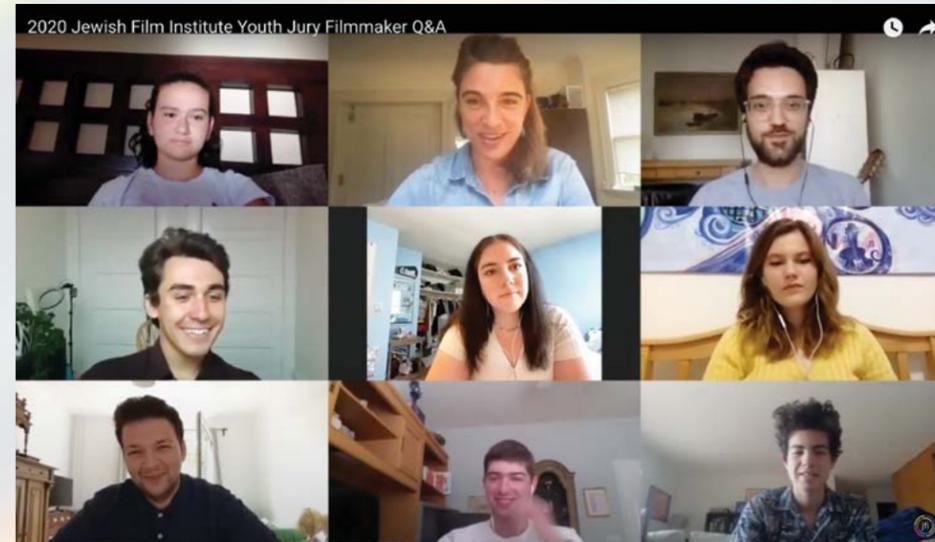
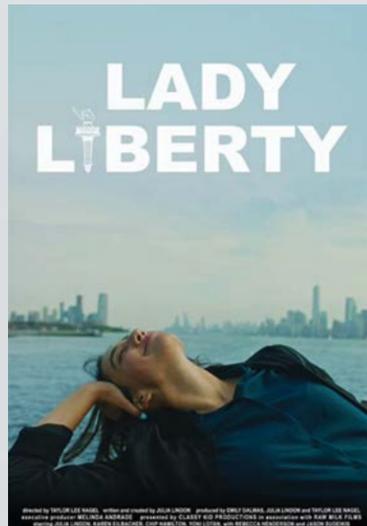
# nurturing new voices



Future generations have a special place in JFI's heart and mission. With dedicated programs for teens and young adults, JFI engages communities of Gen Z and Millennial film lovers and aspiring filmmakers. At **NEXT WAVE** events, JFI provides dynamic live programming with food, music, comedy and film pairings year-round. Launched in 2015, our offerings were increasingly in demand 2018-2020, including through the pandemic, and are now reaching global audiences. Just one screening in 2020—co-presented with **Frameline** during Pride Month—had over 1,000 views on social media and 600+ attendees for a live Zoom event alone. Now in its third year, the **FESTIVAL YOUTH JURY** participants learn about film curation and criticism and present the Youth Jury Award. In 2020, in response to our call for entries, the Jury vetted almost 300 shorts from 35 countries. The winning film—**MASEL TOV COCKTAIL**—was co-directed by two film students from Berlin, Germany. In 2021, JFI will offer the first-ever **JFI SOCIAL CHANGE FILM FELLOWSHIP** for teens, engaging a talented cohort of 12 Bay Area high school fellows in the 15-month pilot program. The Fellows will work as a team alongside JFI staff to craft and promote a series of social justice-focused screenings and conversations for audiences in the Bay Area and beyond.

26 films by filmmakers under 40 presented at Next Wave events

296 student films from 35 countries submitted for 2020 Youth Jury award



*“Over several meetings and through the inspirational leadership of JFI’s Next Wave programmers, my fellow students and I watched, discussed, and ultimately presented an award to one student film, and conducted a great Q&A with the directors. The entire experience was very exciting, and frankly very fun. And I learned a lot about film curation as well.”*

– Emma Penaz Eisner, Youth Jury Member



Top: Youth Jury Zoom 2020, Award-winning film MASEL TOV COCKTAIL

Bottom: Youth Jury 2019, Next Wave post-film dance party

# archiving our stories

1,800+ films  
in the archive

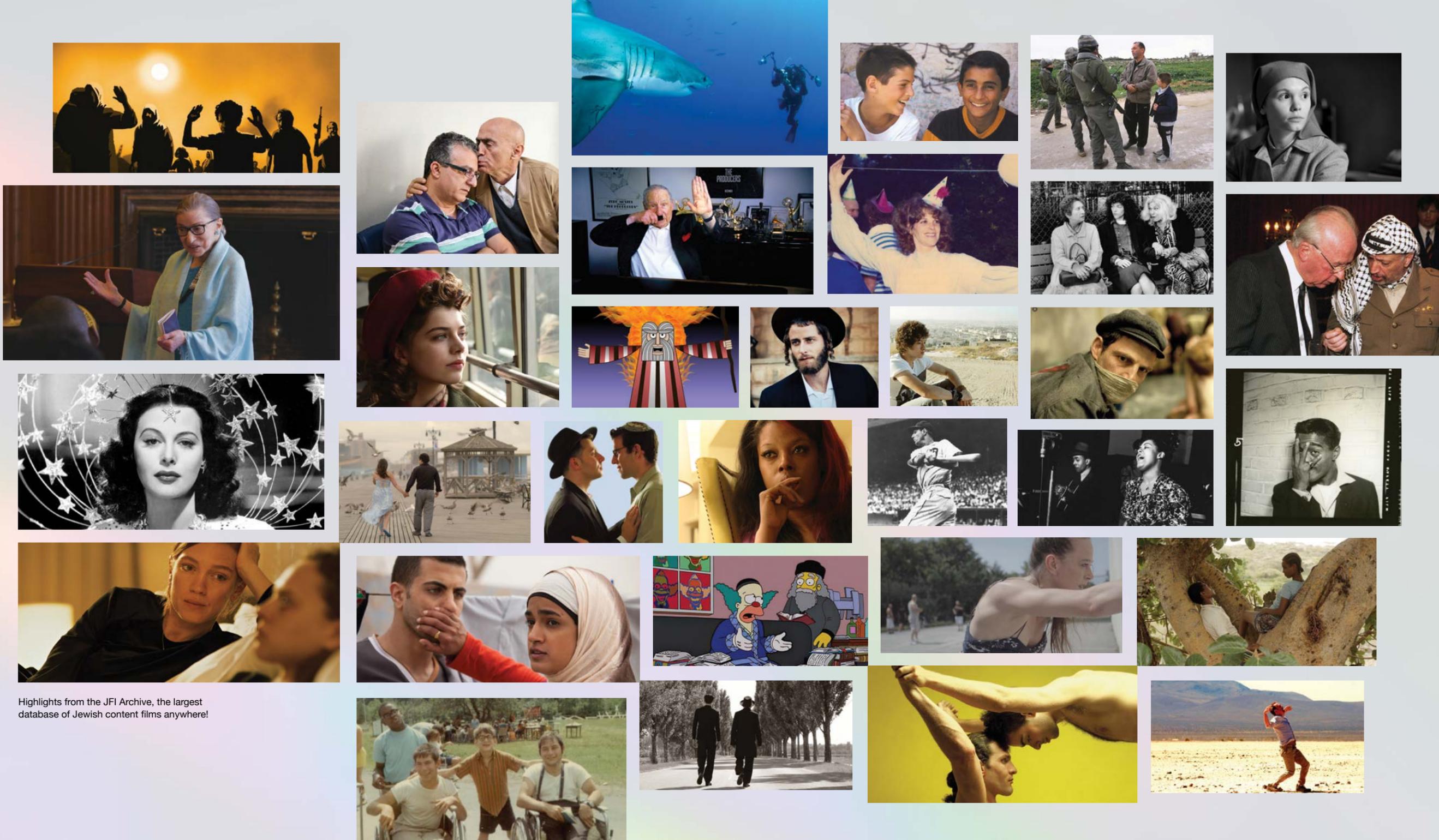
1,442 films from  
outside the US  
in 50 languages

450 films  
indexed via  
JFI on Demand

40K searches  
in the archives—  
a 400% increase  
by 2020

Since our inception 40 years ago, JFI has kept track of every film brought to our audiences across the Bay Area and around the world. We house the **JFI ARCHIVE**, the largest digital database of Jewish content films anywhere, period. By 2020 our archive surpassed 1,800 films with 450 indexed to stream on our online platform **JFI ON DEMAND**. All online content—including JFI curated and produced content—jumped from 1.3M views in 2018 to over 3M in 2020. Scholars, students and film enthusiasts around the world use these resources to search film collections by topic. In 2018, interest in our archive and JFI on Demand grew. Clicks revealed a 400% increase in just two years from 10,000 to 40,000 annual views. Our **MONTHLY ONLINE SHORTS** program also hit important milestones. In 2019, the program surpassed its 100th monthly film mark and 10-year anniversary. Platforms for online screenings powered by Vimeo, YouTube, Facebook, Zoom and on our **CINEGOGUE BLOG** connected audiences and inspired innovation during the pandemic. An audience favorite was a ground-breaking conversation about the Disability Justice movement with

the creators and subjects of the Academy Award®-nominated documentary, *CRIP CAMP*. These additions have been an essential part of this growth and are shaping what comes next.



Highlights from the JFI Archive, the largest database of Jewish content films anywhere!

# stories she tells

In this #MeToo era, with Time's Up in full swing, and organizations like Geena Davis Institute, Sundance, Women In Film, 50/50 by 2020 and Gamechanger Films agitating for gender parity, a new consciousness seems to be changing things in the entertainment industry. But even with this progress, there is a long way to go. In the almost 100-year history of the Academy Awards®, only five women have been nominated for Best Director. Women account for only 25% of tv creators, while 79% of tv shows employ no women directors at all. These statistics don't begin to reflect the persistent, unquantifiable obstacles women and people of color encounter working on both sides of the camera. To lean in on these issues more fully, in honor of JFI's 40th Anniversary we launched **STORIES SHE TELLS**, a new two-year initiative that shines a spotlight on the contributions of Jewish women in front of and behind the camera. Guest Curator, Caroline Libresco, the founding director of the Sundance Women's Initiative and Sundance Catalyst, and the former Associate Director of the SFJFF, returned to JFI to curate this groundbreaking program which runs through 2021.

## Highlights from the inaugural Stories She Tells series

### THIS IS PERSONAL

Screening and post-film conversation addressing challenges facing contemporary feminist activists, including wrestling with racism in the movement; including a panel of diverse Jewish women thought leaders facilitated by Ilana Kaufman, the Executive Director of the Jews of Color Initiative.



**Emily Nussbaum**  
**Unruly Women: Jewish Female Characters on TV**  
A provocative conversation with Pulitzer Prize-winner and New Yorker staff writer Emily Nussbaum that delved into never before charted territory.

### THE GLORIAS

Sneak Preview of the feature film about feminist icon Gloria Steinem's life as a writer, activist and organizer for women's rights worldwide. Followed by a conversation with director Julie Taymor.



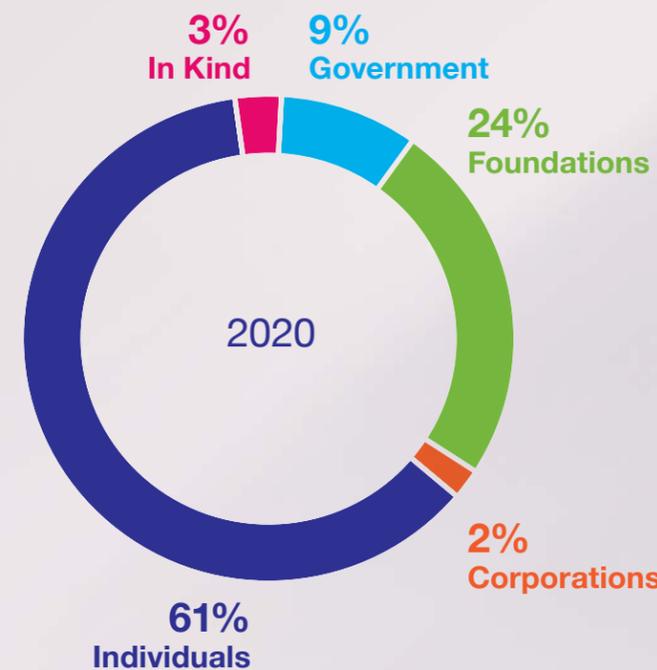
**ASIA**  
Spotlight on Israel's Foreign Language Oscar Entry for 2020 followed by a Q&A with filmmakers and renowned historian Annette Insdorf produced at New York's 92nd Street Y in partnership with JFI.



# financials

	2018	2019	2020
<b>revenue</b>			
earned	450,025	404,967	66,207
contributed	1,429,964	1,552,111	1,397,554
<b>total revenue</b>	<b>1,879,989</b>	<b>1,957,078</b>	<b>1,463,761</b>
<b>expenses</b>			
exhibition	1,100,873	1,027,834	469,921
filmmaker services	275,218	256,959	313,280
occupancy & administrative	221,946	236,585	238,488
development	300,818	365,308	371,931
<b>total expenses</b>	<b>1,898,855</b>	<b>1,886,686</b>	<b>1,393,620</b>
<b>carryover</b>	<b>(18,866)</b>	<b>70,392</b>	<b>70,141</b>

Total Contributed Income: \$1.40 MM



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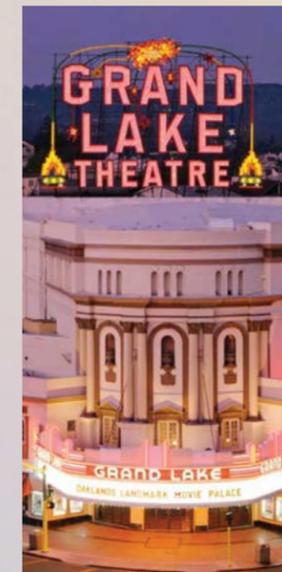
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