

POV Presents

AND SHE COULD BE NEXT



Directed by: Grace Lee and Marjan Safinia

Produced by Grace Lee, Marjan Safinia, and Jyoti Sarda

Episode 1: 112 mins | Episode 2: 83 mins. | USA | 2020

www.andshecouldbenext.com



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Logline

And She Could Be Next, directed by Grace Lee and Marjan Safinia, tells the story of a defiant movement of women of color, transforming politics from the ground up. The series follows candidates and organizers across the country, asking whether democracy itself can be preserved—and made stronger—by those most marginalized. The series features history-makers including Rashida Tlaib and Stacey Abrams.

Synopsis

In a polarized America, where the dual forces of white supremacy and patriarchy threaten to further erode our democracy, a game-changing transformation is happening at the grassroots. As demographics shift toward a non-white majority, elections will be decided by Americans inspired to vote for the first time. Many of these voters, who are often black, brown, immigrant or poor, are ignored by politicians and journalists alike. *And She Could Be Next* a two-part documentary series directed by Peabody Award-winner Grace Lee (*American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*) and Iranian documentary filmmaker Marjan Safinia (*Seeds*), tells the story of a defiant movement of women of color who are transforming American politics from the ground up. The documentary series, filmed from 2018 through 2019, follows forward-thinking candidates and organizers across the country, asking whether democracy itself can be preserved—and made stronger—by those most marginalized. The series is centered on individuals at the heart of the movement behind the New American Majority, including: **Stacey Abrams** (Georgia), **Bushra Amiwala** (Skokie, IL), **Maria Elena Durazo** (Los Angeles, CA), **Veronica Escobar** (El Paso, TX), **Lucy McBath** (Atlanta, GA), **Rashida Tlaib** (Detroit, MI) and **Nse Ufot**, Executive Director of the New Georgia Project. *And She Could Be Next*, features an entirely women of color creative team and credits contributing field directors: Yoruba Richen, Geeta Gandbhir, Amber Fares, Deborah Esquenazi, Ramona Emerson and Anayansi Prado.

In association with POV, *And She Could Be Next* is produced by Grace Lee, Marjan Safinia and Jyoti Sarda and directed by Grace Lee and Marjan Safinia. Academy Award® nominee and Emmy®, BAFTA®, Peabody winner Ava DuVernay is an executive producer and Justine Nagan and Chris White are the executive producers for POV.

Episode Descriptions

“Episode One: Building The Movement” opens with the powerful reminder that “women of color have been the backbone of our communities forever.” An energetic montage of modern American civil rights movements—from women’s suffrage to Stonewall, Black Lives Matter to Standing Rock—brings us to the 2018 midterm elections where a new generation of women of color is ready to take the lead. The documentary goes behind-the-scenes at local rallies, war rooms and church basements, where candidates and organizers embark on the campaign trail. We also witness the unique challenges they face, from well-resourced incumbents to systemic barriers that disproportionately affect black, brown and immigrant communities. As we get to know these women, we see how they do not live “single issue lives” but are each a product of a larger movement—one that is coalition-based, intergenerational and interfaith. RT: 112 mins.

“Episode Two: Claiming Power” takes us to the weeks leading up to election day and focuses on how organizers combat voter suppression in their own communities. At the heart of the episode is a growing multi-ethnic coalition in Georgia, a state with a rich history of civil rights organizing and poised to be a “majority minority” state as early as 2025. In addition to the New Georgia Project, groups like Mijente and Asians for Abrams put boots on the ground to address language barriers, poll purges and “exact match” laws that impact thousands of voters across the state. As results roll in, there is celebration for some and disappointment for others—but for these community organizers, the work does not stop when the polls close. Through it all, these women present a collective vision of political power that is rooted in care, dignity and joy, and remind us that there is an organizer in all of us. RT: 83 mins

Resources

Trailer: [And She Could Be Next Trailer](#)

Photos: [And She Could Be Next Photos](#)

Pressroom: [PBS/POV Press Room](#)



@shecouldbenext

Hashtags: #andshecouldbenext #shecouldbenext #stepintoyourpower #UnstoppableWoC
#WhenWomenLead #shecouldbenextPBS

Inspiration

We live in politically polarizing times. Like many Americans, we have spent the past few years trying to make sense of this moment. As a predominantly all-woman of color team, we are acutely conscious of the rise of patriarchy and white supremacy, and equally attuned to the rapid “browning” of America. Our democracy needs to be more reflective of the people it represents. Women of color building and claiming political power, whether as candidates or organizers, felt like the story nobody was telling in the wake of the 2016 election. A story that was bigger than the Pussyhat Project™, and much more intersectional. A story that went beyond simply talking about black and white issues. The growing New American Majority is the story that will shape our political discourse for generations to come.

And She Could Be Next explicitly centers race and gender in a much-needed political conversation. There's not an issue that Americans face that isn't worse if you're black or brown. Many of these people feel unseen. Building a country that includes the nearly half of American voters who don't engage in the political system is the most important strategy for rebooting our democracy. When we build a system that works for the most marginalized, we build a system that works for all.

In late 2016 and through 2017, we undertook a complex research project to find the right people to follow for our story. It was important they be women of color and embody the idea of changing the narrative in this country. Women who lived at the intersection of the issues keeping us awake at night—islamophobia, immigration, gun violence, racism, sexism. We wanted to find diversity not just in ethnic backgrounds, but also in geography, age and experience. The candidates we followed all made history with their elections and have continued to dominate the headlines. Each comes from long traditions of political organizing and running for office is the evolution of that path. We see organizers as an equally critical part of any political movement, and believe their stories deserve to be told. Together, as candidates and organizers, they are one movement, writing a dynamic new playbook for inclusive democracy where absolutely nobody is waiting to be saved.

From the first frame to the last, the screen is filled with women and people of color of every kind. All too often when this happens in documentary, the stories we see are of communities in crisis or in victimhood. On our screen, the audience sees themselves reflected in their power, their joy, their labor, their vulnerabilities and their brilliance. If you're an immigrant, a young person, a person of faith, or simply someone who has felt unseen for too long, you will recognize yourself in this story. We cannot underestimate the profound effect this project has had on all of us. We all have the ability to move people, build community and make the change we want to see in the world. There's an organizer in all of us.

And She Could Be Next is inexorably tied to our own identities, gender, race and politics. We, too, are the New American Majority. Representation matters at every level of this project. Within the documentary field, there are also issues with diversity, equity and

inclusion and for too long the world's narratives have been filtered through a white and mostly male lens. From the outset, we knew that we wanted to work with an incredible team of women documentary storytellers of color who were close cultural matches with our participants. Our core team of storytellers are women of color, and our larger crew, are black, brown, immigrant, queer or non-binary. In the continuing conversation about representation in media, and who gets to tell whose stories, this project lives its values at every level. *And She Could Be Next* makes clear how women of color are upending the status quo and leading in new ways.

Now that we find ourselves in a global pandemic, the disparities in America are clearer than ever before. We hope to use the film to highlight a conversation about the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on communities of color, how that is rooted in structural racism, and how the pandemic stands to impact our electoral process in a critical election year. The organizers we followed are reporting a massive impact on their ability to do voter engagement, and indeed, on the ability of communities of color to vote (safely) at all.



Women Featured in *And She Could Be Next*

Stacey Abrams (Georgia)



Stacey Yvonne Abrams is a *New York Times* bestselling author, serial entrepreneur, nonprofit CEO and political leader who served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 2007 to 2017, and served as minority leader from 2011 to 2017. In 2018, Abrams became the Democratic nominee for Governor of Georgia, winning more votes than any other Democrat in the state's history. Website: <https://fairfight.com/>

Bushra Amiwala (Skokie, IL)



Bushra Amiwala, 21, a Pakistani American college student from Skokie, Illinois, is the youngest Muslim elected official in the United States, serving on the Skokie School Board of Education. At age 19, she first ran for local office—for a seat on the Cook County Board of Commissioners. A true changemaker, Bushra was inspired to run for office to serve as a voice for her underrepresented community and generation. Her work to fight injustice and to ensure that government works for all of us has led to her being recognized as *Glamour* magazine's College Woman of the Year, *Seventeen* magazine's Voice of the Year, and internationally as *CosmoGirl*'s Change Maker of the Year. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Indo-American Democratic Organization (IADO), GenerationVote, Women Empowering Women in Illinois Legislation (WeWill) and SheVotesIL. In 2020, she will graduate from college and will start as an incoming Associate at Google.

Senator Maria Elena Durazo (Los Angeles, CA)



Maria Elena Durazo is an American politician serving in the California State Senate. A Democrat, she represents the 24th State Senate district, which includes Central Los Angeles and East Los Angeles. Prior to being elected to the State Senate, she served as the Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor from May 2006 until December 2014. She currently serves as the Executive Vice President of the governing Executive Council of the national AFL-CIO and as a Vice Chair of the Democratic National Committee. Website: <https://sd24.senate.ca.gov/>

Congresswoman Veronica Escobar (El Paso, TX)



Veronica Escobar is an American politician serving as the U.S. Representative for Texas's 16th congressional district since 2019. A member of the Democratic Party, she served as an El Paso County Commissioner from 2007 to 2011 and the El Paso County Judge from 2011 until 2017. Website: <https://escobar.house.gov/>

Congresswoman Lucy McBath (Atlanta, GA)



Lucia Kay McBath is an American gun control advocate and politician who is a member of the United States House of Representatives from Georgia's 6th congressional district. Website: <https://mcbath.house.gov/>

Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib (Detroit, MI)



Rashida Harbi Tlaib is an American politician and lawyer serving as the U.S. Representative for Michigan's 13th congressional district since 2019. The district includes the western half of Detroit, along with several of its western suburbs and much of the Downriver area. Tlaib is also a fierce civil rights advocate and was the first Muslim woman to serve in the Michigan legislature. Website: <https://tlaib.house.gov/>

Nse Ufot (Atlanta, GA)



Powerhouse lawyer turned top voter engagement strategist, Nse continues to be a force behind changing the political landscape in Georgia. She is on a mission to reshape Georgia, one voter at a time. In her role as CEO of the [New Georgia Project](#) and the [New Georgia Project Action Fund](#), she leads an ambitious effort to register new voters of color and young people, while cultivating civic engagement through an innovative blend of technology, art, and culture. Nse's experience as an immigrant from Nigeria has prepared her to fight for the American Dream for everyone. Under her leadership, the New Georgia Project continues their groundbreaking work – ultimately creating a stronger, better Georgia for all.

Women of Color and the Democratic Process Fact Sheet

Demographics of Political Power

- The United States ranks 75th globally for representation of women in government.¹
- Despite making up more than half of the electorate, women and women of color face an uphill battle when it comes to gender parity among elected leadership.
- Women make up less than one-third of Congresspeople while women of color -- who represent 20% of the population -- account for only 8.8% of the 535 members of the U.S. Congress; only 4% of all elected office.²
- Research has shown that when they're on the ballot, women of all races win elections at the same rates as white men.³
- The increase in women candidates on the ballot in 2018 translated into more women in elected office in 2019. Across local, state, and federal races, women in elected office have increased from 28% to 31%, a rate of increase of 10% since 2015. Congressional seats held by women increased by 23% from 2015 to 2019.⁴
- From 2015 to 2019, women's share of statewide executive offices increased by 57%. Today 38% of the nation's statewide executive leaders – including governors, attorneys general, and treasurers – are women.⁵
- Since 2015, women of color have increased dramatically as both candidates and elected officials across all levels of office, including a 40% increase in Congressional seats and 38% of State Legislature seats.⁶
- As of April 2020, of the 302 (out of 535) districts already filed for the 2020 elections, over 28% identify as women -- already surpassing the total number filed in 2018 by over four percent.⁷
- The New American Majority is a term to describe a multicultural electorate composed of women, youth, and people of color.

Participation in the Democratic Process

- While the difference in voter turnout rates between the sexes is greatest for Black communities, women have voted at higher rates than men among Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites in the last eight presidential elections.⁸

¹ [CNBC](#)

² ["The Electability Myth"](#) (Reflective Democracy Campaign, 2019)

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Kelly Dittmar, "[Denominators Matter: Women as a Percentage of All Candidates and Nominees](#)" (Rutgers University, Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), 04/22/2020)

⁸ [Gender Differences in Voter Turnout](#) (Rutgers University, CAWP, 2019)

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- In 2018, turnout among women of color voters also surged more than 15 percentage points compared with that of the previous midterm elections in 2014. Women of color also played a central role in engaging with and mobilizing others to participate.⁹
 - Women of color now represent almost one-third of citizen voting-age (CVA) women, an increase of 10 percentage points from 2000 to 2017. Between 2000 and 2017, the CVAP of Black women increased by 31%. Today, at least 15 million Black women are voting-age U.S. citizens—approximately 3.5 million more than in 2000.¹⁰
 - In 2018, young-adult [aged 18 to 29] early voting turnout surged by a whopping 188%, compared to 2014.¹¹ Even so, less than one-third of all eligible young-adult voters turned out to vote in 2018, which still shattered turnout rates from the past quarter-century.¹²
 - By election day 2020, Millennials and Gen-Z will represent more than a third of the eligible voting population of this country. Simultaneously, people of color [non-whites] will account for a third of eligible voters -- their largest share ever.¹³

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⁹ Taeku Lee and others, “[Ahead of the Majority: Foregrounding Women of Color](#)” (The AAPI Civic Engagement Fund and Groundswell Fund, 2019)

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Julie Beck and Caroline Kitchener, “[Early Signs of a Youth Wave](#)” (The Atlantic, 11/6/2018)

¹² [Spring 2019 Harvard IOP Youth Poll](#) (Harvard Kennedy School, Institute of Politics, 2019)

¹³ Anthony Cilluffo and Richard Fry, “[An early look at the 2020 electorate](#)” (Pew Research Center, 01/30/2019)

The Filmmaking Team

Grace Lee, Director/Producer And She Could Be Next



Grace Lee directed and produced the Peabody Award-winning AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY: THE EVOLUTION OF GRACE LEE BOGGS about the legendary civil rights activist which *The Hollywood Reporter* called “an entertainingly revealing portrait of the power of a single individual to effect change.” The film won multiple festival audience awards and was broadcast on the PBS documentary series POV. Other directing credits include the Emmy-nominated MAKERS: WOMEN IN POLITICS for PBS; the interactive online documentary K-TOWN ‘92 about the 1992 Los Angeles civil unrest, OFF THE MENU: ASIAN AMERICA; and the feature film JANEANE FROM DES MOINES, set during the 2012 presidential campaign, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival. She has been a Sundance Institute Fellow, a 2017 Chicken & Egg Breakthrough Award winner, an envoy of the American Film Showcase and is co-founder of the Asian American Documentary Network. She recently directed and produced two episodes of PBS’ five-part series ASIAN AMERICANS which broadcasts nationally in May 2020. Click [here](#) to access Lee’s website.

Statement:

I've always been interested in politics but skeptical about politicians. But in 2013, I met Detroit Rashida Tlaib and featured her in my PBS documentary MAKERS: WOMEN IN POLITICS. At that time, Rashida was the first Muslim American woman elected to the Michigan legislature. A daughter of immigrants and rooted in social justice movements, she was funny as hell and incredibly accessible. I'd never met a politician like her and wished she could represent me.

Fast forward to 2016 and Trump takes power, turning Michigan red. He institutes the Muslim ban and other racist, anti-immigrant policies. As a daughter of Korean immigrants, I've always insisted on my rights as an American, but had never faced a situation in which I had to defend them. Within my own family, I have relatives who can't vote as well as U.S. citizens who were locked up in American concentration camps during World War II. The women in our film left it all on the field in 2018 to make sure the American values I believe in remain intact. As a storyteller, I want to bring this movement and these histories to the public and document its effect on the country. It's one small step towards evolving our democracy.

Marjan Safinia, Director/Producer And She Could Be Next



Marjan Safinia is an Iranian documentary filmmaker whose films examine identity, community and social justice. BUT YOU SPEAK SUCH GOOD ENGLISH explores the first-generation immigrant experience from an insider perspective. SEEDS, tells the story of ten brave teenagers from the world's most troubled conflict zones living side-by-side for one life-changing summer. Collectively her films have played at over 100 international film festivals and been broadcast in North America, Europe and across the Arab world. Most recently she produced and directed work for Google Founder Sergey Brin, the Obama administration, and Hillary Clinton's Next Generation. Until 2018, Marjan was the longest-serving President of the Board of Directors of the International Documentary Association (and the only woman of color to lead this organization since it was founded in 1982). She currently serves on the Board of Directors of Chicken & Egg. She co-hosts the pre-eminent online documentary community, The D-Word, and is a regular juror, programmer, speaker and connector of all things documentary. Click [here](#) for more information about Safinia

Statement:

Three weeks after my seventh birthday, my mother, sister and I fled Iran—in the throes of an Islamic Revolution. We arrived in London with one suitcase. We thought it would soon blow over. Eventually our asylum documents turned into passports, but even as citizens, my parents rarely voted. Although England was our home, we always felt like foreigners. For me, the turning point came when I used these experiences to fuel my work.

Some twenty years later, I emigrated for a second time—to the United States. I built a life, eventually marrying an American and settling in “Tehraneles.” But I never felt the urge to become a citizen. That changed on December 8th, 2015 when Candidate Trump first mentioned his “total and complete ban on Muslims entering the country.” When policy turns personal, you have to step up. I applied for citizenship the next day, so that I could vote.

The world is littered with brilliant, passionate, and committed brown girls like me, who feel “other” and too often make themselves small. We need their voices, hard work, and compassionate perspectives. As we tell the stories of these candidates and organizers, I feel hopeful that their example will inspire a ripple effect for generations. How great could America really be if we harnessed and nurtured all this talent?

Jyoti Sarda, Producer And She Could Be Next



Jyoti Sarda brings twenty years as a senior-level global marketing executive with major studios and blue-chip brands to the development of impact-creating, documentary and narrative content. She is Co-Executive Producer of EQUAL MEANS EQUAL, an award-winning documentary feature that is an unflinching examination of the discrimination against women built into the US legal system. Until recently, Jyoti was Vice President of Marketing at Paramount Home Media where she led all facets of global marketing operations for Paramount partner brands, while overseeing international acquisitions. Prior to Paramount, she worked at Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment. Jyoti serves on the boards of GlobalGirl Media, an organization that trains young women to become civically engaged through citizen journalism and LAANE, a leading LA-based social justice nonprofit. She is intently focused on improving the diversity of elected officials and the electorate. Click [here](#) for more information about Sarda.

Statement:

I am an immigrant's daughter. Like so many who came to this country, my father willed his way from the dirt streets of a small Indian village to Stanford University and the American dream. I've had many experiences of feeling 'other' especially growing up in Florida where kids couldn't categorize me as black or white and had never met anyone of Indian descent before.

My first political memory was as a small donor to the McGovern campaign. I added my one dollar to my father's ten dollars. Shirley Chisholm's historic presidential candidacy was not on our radar. Still I grew up believing that participating in the political process at any level was democratic and part of being American.

My father's mantra was when you study hard and work harder, anything is possible—make money and take care of your family. Later, I realized that idea didn't work for everyone. While working on the documentary, Equal Means Equal, I began to understand the intricate web of laws in place that systematically undermined the agency of women, especially women of color. No matter how hard they worked, women were not getting ahead.

If the laws were unjust, then it seemed the practical answer was to change the lawmakers, who were overwhelmingly white and male. I set out to find a seasoned filmmaker who felt the same way and found Grace Lee. As we developed the women in politics project, the 2016 election results rolled in...

Ava DuVernay, Executive Producer And She Could Be Next



Academy Award nominee and winner of the Emmy, the BAFTA and the Peabody, Ava DuVernay is a writer, director, producer and film distributor. Her directorial work includes *WHEN THEY SEE US*, nominated for 16 Emmys, the Oscar-winning historical drama *SELMA*, the Oscar-nominated criminal justice documentary *13TH* and Disney's *A WRINKLE IN TIME*, with which she became the highest grossing African American woman director in domestic box office history. She also oversees production of her hit TV series *QUEEN SUGAR*. Winner of the 2012 Sundance Film Festival's Best Director Prize for *MIDDLE OF NOWHERE*, DuVernay amplifies the work of people of color and women of all kinds through her independent film collective *ARRAY*, named one of Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies. In 2017, she was featured as one of Fortune Magazine's 50 Greatest Culture Leaders and TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People. DuVernay sits on the boards of Sundance Institute and Film Independent. Click [here](#) to access DuVernay's website.

Statement:

"If ever there was a moment where we need to be reminded of the leadership of women of color, that time is now. "If you're an immigrant, a young person, a person of faith, or simply someone who has felt unseen for too long, you will find yourself reflected in this story.

Field Directors

Yoruba Richen

Yoruba's work has been featured on PBS, New York Times Op Doc, Frontline, New York Magazine's website, The Cut, and The Atlantic. Her feature documentary, THE NEW BLACK, won multiple audience awards and best documentary at the Urbanworld Film Festival, was nominated for a NAACP Image Award and a GLAAD Media Award and was broadcast on Independent Lens. Yoruba's previous film PROMISED LAND, received a Diverse Voices Co-Production fund award from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and won the Fledgling Fund award for social issue documentary. Yoruba is a featured TED Speaker, a Guggenheim and Sundance Fellow and a 2016 recipient of the Chicken & Egg Breakthrough Filmmaker Award. She is director of the documentary program at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism and most recently directed GREEN BOOK: GUIDE TO FREEDOM for the Smithsonian Channel and The Sit In: Harry Belafonte Hosts The Tonight Show.

Geeta Gandbhir

Geeta Gandbhir is an award-winning director, producer and editor. As director, she won Best Documentary at the 2019 News and Doc Emmys for I AM EVIDENCE, an HBO Documentary Film, and ARMED WITH FAITH which aired on PBS. As editor, she won a Primetime Emmy for Spike Lee's WHEN THE LEVEES BROKE and also for the HBO film BY THE PEOPLE, THE ELECTION OF BARACK OBAMA. A documentary film she co-produced, THE SENTENCE for HBO, also won a 2019 Special Jury Primetime Emmy. Other films she edited, MR DYNAMITE: THE RISE OF JAMES BROWN, MY NEIGHBORHOOD, and WHEN THE LEVEES BROKE all won Peabody Awards. Another film she edited, MUSIC BY PRUDENCE, won an Academy Award in 2010. From 2018-2019 she directed the series WHY WE HATE with Amblin Entertainment and Jigsaw Productions for Discovery, a feature doc HUNGRY TO LEARN for Soledad O'Brien Productions, and an episode of the PBS series ASIAN AMERICANS.

Amber Fares

Amber directed and shot her film SPEED SISTERS (Hot Docs, 2015) that follows a team of Palestinian women race car drivers and was the Director of Photography on THE JUDGE (TIFF, 2017). She has cinematography credits on several upcoming documentaries in production including LOVE AND STUFF (Judith Helfand), a short film on Standing Rock (THE FRONT), and BASEMENT BHANGRA (Fictionless). Amber has branched into episodic series, working on shows such as AMERICA INSIDE OUT with Katie Couric for National Geographic (Senior Producer and cinematographer), and TRANSPARENT season 4 for Amazon (Associate Producer).

Deborah S. Esquenazi

Deborah's first feature SOUTHWEST OF SALEM: THE STORY OF THE SAN ANTONIO FOUR, won a Peabody, Critic's Choice Award for 'Best First Feature', an Emmy nomination for 'Outstanding Social Issue Documentary', and a GLAAD Media Award for

'Outstanding Documentary'. The film helped exonerate the 'San Antonio Four' a group of Latinas wrongfully accused of rape who were imprisoned for 15 years. Esquenazi is also a Rockwood JustFilms Ford Fellow, Sundance Documentary Film Fellow, Sundance Creative Producing Fellow, and a Firelight Film Fellow. She is a native of Texas and is based in Austin where she lives with her wife and two children.

Anayansi Prado

Anayansi Prado was born in Panama and moved to the United States as a teenager. Credits include MAID IN AMERICA (PBS, 2004) about Latina domestic workers; CHILDREN IN NO MAN'S LAND (PBS, 2008) about unaccompanied minors crossing the border; and PARAISO FOR SALE (PBS, 2011) about Americans moving to Panama. In 2006, Prado executive produced and directed the Discovery en Español doc series VOCES DE CAMBIO (Voices of Change) featuring Carlos Santana and Edward James Olmos. Her most recent film is THE UNAFRAID, about a movement of undocumented students in Georgia banned from attending the state's top public universities.

Key Creative Team

Editor, Juli Vizza

Juli Vizza is an award-winning editor with nearly two decades of experience in both fiction and non-fiction filmmaking. Their films have premiered at the top film festivals, including Sundance, Berlin and Tribeca and have been broadcast on PBS, Showtime, and The History Channel. They received an Emmy Award for their editing on the 2002 Winter Olympics for NBC. In addition to their work as editor on AND SHE COULD BE NEXT, they are also the editor of THE WORLDS OF URSULA K. LE GUIN, which explores the life and legacy of a groundbreaking science fiction author, which will broadcast on American Masters in August 2019. Juli co-produced and edited the feature-length documentary XMAS WITHOUT CHINA, which premiered at SXSW. They are also the producer of NINE TO NINETY, which premiered at Hot Docs, broadcast nationally on PBS, and was nominated for an IDA Award.

Director of Photography, Asad Faruqi

Asad Faruqi is an Emmy Nominated Cinematographer/Filmmaker whose work has been featured on HBO, The New York Times, PBS, ABC, Amazon Prime, Channel 4, CBC, SBS, Al-Jazeera to name a few. Credits include the 2016 Academy Award winning short documentary, A GIRL IN THE RIVER and 2012's Academy and Emmy Award winning film SAVING FACE. Both were produced for HBO Documentaries by SOCFilms. Most recently, he was the cinematographer and co-director on ARMED WITH FAITH (2017) produced by G2P2 Films, which won an Emmy. The film played on PBS and Al-Jazeera. Asad was the cinematographer and co-producer on SONG OF LAHORE (2015) produced by Ravi Films and distributed theatrically by Broad Green Pictures and Amazon Prime. Other notable works include Emmy and Alfred I Dupont Award winning, PAKISTAN'S TALIBAN GENERATION 2009), TRANSGENDERS: PAKISTAN'S OPEN SECRET (2011), PEACEKEEPERS: A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES (2015) and NEW HOMELAND (2018).

Gingger Shankar, Composer

Gingger Shankar is a singer, violinist and composer, and was born into one of the world's most acclaimed and influential musical families. She has worked with artists including The Smashing Pumpkins, Trent Reznor, Mike Myers, and James Newton Howard. Gingger composed music for the critically acclaimed Sundance U.S. Dramatic Audience Award Winner CIRCUMSTANCE and was the artist and co-composer behind the score of Mel Gibson's blockbuster PASSION OF THE CHRIST. Gingger's music can also be heard in Mike Nichols' film, CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR. Her multimedia project HIMALAYA SONG premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and was named one of the '10 Best Music Films at Sundance 2012' by Rolling Stone. Recent projects include HEARTBEATS directed by Duane Adler with Jay-Z and Roc Nation, and Former First Lady Michelle Obama's WE WILL RISE which aired on CNN. Her personal project NARI, which debuted at the Toronto and Sundance Film Festivals follows the story of Lakshmi and Viji Shankar (her mother and grandmother) as they brought Indian music to the West with Ravi Shankar and George Harrison.

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A Q&A with Grace Lee, Marjan Safinia and Jyoti Sarda

Making *And She Could Be Next*

Q: What inspired you to make this film?

Grace: I've always been interested in politics, but politicians- not so much. In 2013 I met Rashida Tlaib, then a state representative in Michigan and she shattered my stereotype of what a politician could be. She was a social worker at heart, a midwesterner, bilingual, the daughter of immigrants, a mother of young kids -- someone who reminded me of me and my friends. As a filmmaker, I've always been interested in stories about America where social justice, politics, race identity and community intersect - and this series allowed me to lean into these passions.

Marjan: Like so many people I know, I was in a daze after the 2016 elections. I felt stunned, powerless, and fearful. As someone who is a two-time immigrant, someone who comes from Iran—a favorite country to target with hateful rhetoric—as a woman, as a new American citizen, in so many ways I felt my core identities under attack. So when Grace called me to ask if I was interested in coming on board *And She Could Be Next*, it was a no-brainer. The choice to focus on women of color, to reframe their stories which are too-often told from a victim point of view, to be able to show them in all their brilliance and power and genius was exactly what I needed. But more importantly, it immediately resonated as something so many women, people of color and immigrants in this country would be hungry to see. We need to see fresh images of our people, of the New American Majority.

Jyoti: As an activist, albeit a reluctant one, I was interested in shining a spotlight on the hurdles women face in building political power even as the country appeared to be squarely on the road to electing the first woman president in 2016. Just as electing the first black president had not settled race relations, it was clear that the conversation around gender and who could be President was also tenuous. I realized early on that this was a complex topic requiring a seasoned storyteller who was political and nuanced, someone like Grace Lee. Grace brought in Marjan, an equally passionate storyteller and social justice advocate. I was naive enough to think we could pull this off.

Q: How have your experiences as a woman of color impacted your approach to documentary filmmaking?

Grace: I got into filmmaking to tell stories that reflected the communities and people who I've been around my whole life, but who are rarely reflected in the media -- people of color, immigrants, women, Asian Americans. When making documentaries I try to draw out complexities and questions through the storytelling and assume that there are audiences who crave a similar approach. I make the films I want to see.

Marjan: I started making documentary films because I was so tired of only seeing one kind of Iranian represented on the screen. The kind we saw vilified on the evening news. The crazy bearded fanatics in the film *Not Without My Daughter*. What I saw on TV, and what I knew about my community as an Iranian immigrant were worlds apart. So I decided to do something about it. From there, the bug bit me hard. The privilege and honor of slipping into other people's lives and striving to bring their full, authentic truth to life in a story is profound. At some point, we need to take back the power to represent ourselves, and the people whose stories are rarely told in a non-extractive way. It is impossible to separate my core identities from how I approach my work. How I walk in the world is what impacts my filmmaking.

Jyoti: Although I am new to documentary filmmaking, I have spent my whole life navigating spaces where there were few who looked like me. I understand the feeling of not truly being seen and having to constantly work around assumptions that others place on me. Whether in politics or in storytelling, women of color have to claim their own narrative or others will do it for you.

Q: In the process of making this documentary, were there any moments that resonated, shocked or surprised you?

Grace: I've been voting since I was 18 years old and am more civically engaged than most. However, I was shocked by the level of bureaucracy and confusion around voting in Georgia -- especially when it came to practices like absentee voting, provisional ballots, and accessibility in general. As someone in the series says, voting should just be as easy as breathing, yet in many parts of the country this fundamental right is being actively thwarted.

Working on this project was also akin to working on a political campaign. It was eye-opening to learn that people are still squeamish about talking race AND gender when

it comes to politics even when women of color have been the backbone of so many social movements in this country. At the same time, witnessing the incredible energy, backbreaking work, and love that infuse these movements was inspiring and infectious. Whenever we thought this project was too difficult to pull off, I would reflect back on the women who would put themselves on the line to fight for their communities.

Marjan: Making this film threw into clear relief what I always knew was true, but tried to convince myself it wasn't. It's not a level playing field out there. As filmmakers, we were blessed to find some incredible champions. But for each of those, there were several confounding conversations: Why women of color? Isn't this really just a small piece of a larger story about women? You've bitten off a lot here. Do you think you can pull this off? I'm not sure there's a big enough audience for this story out there. Each of these conversations reflect the schism in this country. A diminishing of the story of women of color. An invisibility of communities of color. A lack of faith. We asked ourselves several times what would have happened if we had been a team of white men wanting to tell a story about white male politicians. How might these conversations have been different? But, we took solace in the fact that we have spent our lives pushing back against low expectations. We were well prepared.

In terms of story I was truly stunned by what unfolded in Georgia. The term "voter suppression" can make your eyes glaze over, until you see it in action in front of you. Until you understand its systemic design. Until you feel what people have at stake, and what they have to tolerate in order to do something simple that should be at the heart of our democracy. But as demoralizing as that was, each time we saw the light turn on in someone's eyes because they were inspired by seeing someone who shared their lived experience running for office, it restored our faith that it's just a matter of time until things are better.

Jyoti: I've been politically minded since I was young, but I kept political involvement at arm's length and on an intellectual level until 2016. The process of making this film was eye-opening and jaw dropping at the same time. We interviewed all these fierce women from different corners of the country who shared similar qualities - being motivated to run for office not for personal gain but by personal experiences, by wanting to fix issues that touched their families or someone they knew, and I learned how powerful making politics personal can be. The young activists were particularly inspiring as they brought everything they had to champion campaigns that reflected their dreams and their futures. Finally, the lesson from the organizers was not to hang your hat on any one election and that civic engagement was a daily ritual like brushing your teeth. You wouldn't stop brushing your teeth just because you had a bad dentist appointment, would you?

What we learned about voter suppression was jaw dropping. You really can't believe how pernicious the forces against representation are until you see it unfold. What happened in Georgia happens regularly in communities of color. Why should anyone have to wait four hours or more just to express their right to vote. These forces will use the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to make it more difficult for the same communities to vote this November. The primaries are just the beginning of a whole new set of voter suppression tactics.

American Communities and the Democratic Process

Q: In your own words what would a more perfect/reflective democracy look like?

Grace: It means our governments -- local, state, and federal, would actually accurately reflect this country's demographics. Majority women, diverse in ethnicity, gender, age, and geographic density.

Marjan: A democracy that looks like America. Plain and simple. America is on the precipice of becoming a majority non-white country, and the gulf between our people and our leadership is extreme. If we believe in the idea of representational government, then there is no remedy to strengthen our democracy other than for it to become reflective. When that happens, people engage in the process, and feel invited into their unique role in civic life. As Stacey Abrams says in our film, "When you change the face of leadership, you change what leadership sees."

Jyoti: For me, it's not about perfection or chasing an ideal. However, it would be exciting to see an exponential jump in voting and other forms of civic engagement. More diversity in ethnicity, age, background, etc. from our candidates and elected officials can create more excitement and involvement. The issues on the ballot are also important. We have some big challenges as a society to figure out. The more we are all involved in solving those problems, the better. There's evidence that better decision making and outcomes come from including diverse points of view. And we sure could use better decision making about now.

Q: From active voter suppression tactics, gerrymandering and the elimination of polling places in communities of color, our voting rights are under attack. From your perspective what are the best ways that our communities can help defend or protect democracy?

Grace: Look out for the people around you who may need help being civically engaged. It's not just about voting but staying up to date about what issues are at stake in your community and who will help represent your values. Civic engagement doesn't just revolve around elections, but staying well-informed, being connected to your elected representatives and holding them accountable. Not everyone has time to do this but try to meet the people around you where they are. It could be as simple as giving a ride to the polls or offering childcare when someone does want to get involved.

Marjan: The idea of providing people with a political home is very powerful. Many organizations like New Georgia Project, Black Voters Matter and Care in Action are doing this work. It goes so much further than just getting your vote. It means showing up for you in your community, and being your trusted partner in helping you engage in the decisions that most affect your life all year round. These processes are made complicated by design. They are made off-putting for a reason. They are built to make you feel stupid or confused so that you give up, and don't exercise your voice. So we need to find ways to make civic engagement cool again. Some of the organizers we filmed with have cracked the code on culturally relevant voter engagement. More fun. Something you can do with your family. Something young people want to be part of.

We also need to make it easier to participate. It is shocking to me that in any given election, almost half of Americans don't vote. Every eligible American should automatically become registered at 18. No state should have "use it or lose it" laws. And then we need to turn out in overwhelming numbers, no matter the obstacles. In Georgia we witnessed "suppression by a thousand cuts" and *still* it came down to about 55,000 votes in a race normally decided by a few hundred thousand votes. If everyone turned out and voted every time, our people power could overwhelm political shenanigans.

Jyoti: We all need to be educated on what modern day voter suppression looks like in order to combat it. If you have the means, support organizations like New Georgia Project - there's one or more in every state - that fight for voter rights. Stay engaged and involved. Keep your voices loud.

Q: What would you say to women who are thinking about running for office or getting more involved in their communities?

Grace: There is an organizer in everyone. You don't have to run for office to make a difference in your community, neighborhood, family, school, workplace, or place of worship. Start as small and local as you want and branch out from there. Pay attention to the most vulnerable in your circles and learn how to listen to others.

Marjan: Just do it. Go online, find out who represents you at the local and state level, sign up for their emails and start going to their meetings. Join a telephone town hall. Sign up for City Council agendas to come to your email. Pin the phone numbers for your reps up on your wall and make sure you call their office when something isn't right by you. Just try it a few times and you'll be amazed how much you learn, and what influence you can actually have on decisions that affect your life by picking up that phone or showing up to that meeting. And how you can then pass that along to others in your life. In 2007 I showed up to one local government meeting at my local Neighborhood Council District in LA and spent the next 12 years serving on that board. I managed to make real, tangible, lasting change in my community. Power is rarely given. It has to be won. But remember who you are fighting for, and why it matters to you, and let that be your North Star.

Jyoti: You don't have to run for office to get more involved in your community. There are problems to be solved at every level - locally, nationally and globally. You don't have to solve every problem. Each of us has an activist superpower even if it's dormant right now. Figure out what that thing is that you are good at, that works for you and do it. And stay open to people who think in different ways and live in different circumstances than your own.

If you find that your superpower is running for office, then do it. Call on the organizations who train and support women running for office. In many ways, there's never been a better time to be a woman of color running for office. Go for it!

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Production Credits

And She Could Be Next is a co-production of And She Could Be Next LLC, American Documentary | POV and ITVS, in association with Center for Asian American Media and Latino Public Broadcasting with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

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