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By Steve Pond

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The Women in Film Foundation's Film Finishing Fund, which is celebrating its 25th year of awarding grants to female filmmakers and films about women, has chosen three narrative features as grant recipients for the first time.

The winners, which were chosen from a record 140-plus applicants, include Karin Chien's "Circumstance," Susan Youssef's "Habibi Rasak Kharban" (*photo*) and Frances Lausell's "America."



In addition, grants went to three feature documentaries: Lisa Gossel's "My So-Called Enemy," Yoav Potash's "Crime After Crime" and Nisha Ligon's "Twiga Stars: Tanzania's Soccer Sisters."

The narrative short "Whakatiki," by Melissa Dodds, also received a grant.

The recipients were announced on Wednesday by Betsy Pollock and Nancy Rae Stone, the co-chairs of the fund.

The grants were donated by Netflix, which supports the Women in Film Foundation with \$50,000 in annual funding, as well as distribution recommendations and brand association. Netflix will also consult with the winning filmmakers on marketing and distribution.

Past recipients of grants from the fund include eight Oscar-nominated documentaries, two of which won: Cynthia Wade's short "Freeheld" in 2007, and Freida Lee Mock's "Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision," which infamously took home the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature the year that "Hoop Dreams" failed to land a nomination.

The fund also supported the Emmy-winning films "Men Who Molest, Children Who Survive," "Girls Like Us," "Animated Women" and "Be Good, Smile Pretty."

Descriptions of the winning films, from the Women in Film Foundation press release:

Karin Chien's narrative feature film "**Circumstance**" tells the story of a love triangle between three teenagers, and explores the multifaceted and destructive repression that continues to confront Iran's new generation.

Lisa Gossels's feature length documentary "**My So-Called Enemy**" is a timely and timeless film about the human consequences of all conflicts as seen through the eyes of six young women who are thoughtful, intelligent and articulate beyond their years ... While "My So Called Enemy" speaks to the humanity and complexities of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in every frame, it is also a coming of age story that transcends the conflict.

Frances Lausell's narrative feature film "**America**" tells the story of a woman who struggles to give her daughter a better life in Vieques, a poor beach town, while at the same time she is also being submitted to abuse by her husband.

Nisha Ligon's feature length documentary "**Twiga Stars: Tanzania's Soccer Sisters**" follows a year in the life of the Twiga Stars, Tanzania's national women's football team, as they prepare for their biggest competition ever and struggle to overcome the countless obstacles along the way.

Yoav Potash's feature length documentary "**Crime After Crime**" tells the story of Deborah Peagler, a battered woman imprisoned for over 26 years for her connection to the murder of the man who abused her, forced her into prostitution as a teenager, and molested her daughter.

Susan Youssef's narrative feature film "**Habibi Rasak Kharban**" ("Darling, Something's Wrong with Your Head") tells the story of a forbidden love in Gaza. The film is a modern re-telling of the famous ancient Sufi parable Majnun Layla and is the first full-length narrative set in Gaza in over 15 years.

Melissa Dodds' narrative short "**Whakatiki**" visits one afternoon in the life of Kiri, an overweight Maori woman trapped in an abusive relationship, as she takes a trip to the Whakatiki River where she spent so many summers as a girl.

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