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**THIS IS THE WAY WE RISE TO SCREEN AT 2021 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL
Sundance's Inaugural Merata Mita Fellow, Director Ciara Lacy, Returns To Festival**

**Native Hawaiian Slam Poet Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio In Maunakea
Protection Documentary**

December 15, 2020 (Park City, Utah) --- Sundance's inaugural Merata Mita fellow, Ciara Lacy, returns in 2021 as the first Native Hawaiian woman to have her work screened at the festival. Lacy's film, THIS IS THE WAY WE RISE, features multi-hyphenate talent and fellow Native Hawaiian Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio in a powerful testament to Native creativity and the fight to protect sacred lands.

“Merata Mita's work stood at the intersection of art and activism; as a beneficiary of her legacy, bringing this film about my community to Sundance is even more meaningful. I am beyond thrilled to continue my journey with the festival by presenting my new film, THIS IS THE WAY WE RISE” says Lacy.

THIS IS THE WAY WE RISE is an exploration of the creative process, following Native Hawaiian slam poet Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio as her calling to

protect sacred sites atop Maunakea, Hawai'i, a dormant volcano targeted for construction, reinvigorates her art. The piece was created with the backing of Firelight Media and WNET's American Masters and is part of an anthology of films called *IN THE MAKING*, which tapped filmmakers of color to tell the stories of artists of color.

When measured from its underwater base, Maunakea is the tallest mountain on Planet Earth and home to one of the most sacred collections of sites in the Hawaiian islands. It also boasts near-ideal conditions for astronomical research, drawing scientists from around the world to this unique locale. Over 11 countries have interest in the telescopes atop this mountain. But many question whether these telescopes benefit and serve the Native people the rightful stewards of the land. Multiple state-funded audits and environmental impact assessments have shown that those currently managing the land have failed to suitably care for it, and the Native community has yet to be appropriately compensated for land use, despite a contract mandating this. When an international conglomerate known as the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) stepped in to add yet one more telescope, one many times larger than the already startling array of littering the top of Maunakea, Native Hawaiians reached their limit. Enough was enough. Those protesting the TMT, known as *kia'i*, or “protectors”, argue the construction will further desecrate the sacred mountain.

Lacy adds, “In the summer of 2019, I watched in awe as the protection of sacred sites atop Maunakea, a fight spanning over 50 years, set my community on fire. ” “Native Hawaiians paraded by the thousands in protest, stood on street corners sign waving across America, drove down freeways horns honking with the Hawaiian flag flipped upside down in distress. It was an empowering moment of mass unity beyond my wildest dreams and to somehow be there alongside slam poet, activist, and academic Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio felt like the hand of providence.”

THIS IS THE WAY WE RISE was always meant to be an exploration into the creative process of one of Hawai'i's most promising Native talents. But when the protection of Maunakea ignited amongst Native Hawaiians, Lacy found it became so much more.

“It was the awakening of Jamaica's creativity alongside the awakening of our community, and this film now serves as a powerful record of not only one person's journey towards actualization but also that of a people.” says Lacy. “As we say, *Kū kia'i mauana!*, or defend and protect Maunakea-- for our ancestors, for those alive today, and for future generations. This film is for those who stand on the frontlines.”

The Sundance Film Festival runs from January 28 - February 3, and will present films online and in physical venues. Tickets go on sale January 7. For more information, please visit [Sundance.org](https://www.sundance.org)

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THIS IS THE WAY WE RISE

Directed by Ciara Lacy

2019

13 MINS

Languages: English, Native Hawaiian

THIS IS THE WAY WE RISE is an exploration into the creative process, following Native Hawaiian slam poet Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio as her calling to protect sacred sites atop Maunakea, Hawai'i reinvigorates her art.

FESTIVAL AWARDS

Best Short Film, Thin Line Fest, Denton, TX March 2020 – World Premiere

Best Short Film, Walla Walla Film Crush, Wala Wala, WA Sept 2020 – Washington Premiere

ABOUT THE SUBJECT OF THE FILM

Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio is a *Kanaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiian) *wahine* (female) poet / activist / scholar born and raised in Pālolo Valley to parents Jonathan and Mary Osorio. Jamaica earned her PhD in English (Hawaiian literature) with the completion of her dissertation entitled: “(Re)membering ‘Upena of Intimacies: A Kanaka Maoli Mo‘olelo Beyond Queer Theory.” Currently, Jamaica is an Assistant Professor of Indigenous and Native Hawaiian Politics at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Jamaica is a three-time national poetry champion, poetry mentor and a published author. She is a proud past Kaiāpuni student, Ford fellow, and a graduate of Kamehameha, Stanford (BA) and New York University (MA).

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Ciara Lacy is a Native Hawaiian filmmaker whose interest lies in crafting films that use strong characters and investigative journalism to challenge the creative and political status quo. She has directed content for film and television, managed independent features, as well as coordinated product placement and clearances for various platforms. Her work has screened at festivals around the world as well as shown on networks including Netflix, PBS, ABC, and Al Jazeera. In the digital space, she has created content for notable outlets like *the Guardian* and the *Atlantic Online*. Ciara is honored to be the inaugural Sundance Institute Merata Mita Fellow as well as part of the inaugural class of NATIVE Fellows at the European Film Market. She has also benefited from fellowships with the Sundance Institute and Time Warner Foundation, Firelight Media's Documentary Lab, the Sundance Institute's NativeLab, Tribeca All Access, the Princess Grace Foundation, the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, and the Independent Film Project (IFP). Ciara holds a BA in Psychology from Yale University and has given talks at academic institutions across the U.S. She continues to work on documentary projects while expanding

her intimate style of filmmaking into the branded content, commercial, and narrative spaces.

KEY CREDITS

Director

Cinematography

Editors

Graphic Design

Original Music by

Sound Design and Mix

Story Producer

Executive Producer American Masters

Episodde Producer American Masters

Supervising Producer American Masters

Executive Producers Firelight Media

Series Producer Firelight Media

CIARA LACY

CHAPIN HALL

ADITHYA SAMBAMURTHY

NATHAN CASWELL

LANI RODRIGUEZ

CRAIG SUTHERLAND

DAN TIMMONS

ADITHYA SAMBAMURTHY

MATTHEW CUSHING

MICHAEL KANTOR

JULIE SACKS

JUNKO TSUNASHIMA

STANLEY NELSON

MARCIA SMITH

LOIRA LIMBAL

JULIA PONTECORVO

SOCIAL MEDIA

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IG: [instagram.com/ciaraleilacy](https://www.instagram.com/ciaraleilacy)

#TheWayWeRise #InTheMaking #WeAreMaunakea

FILM STILL PHOTOS + PHOTO LOG

<https://bit.ly/3fBDGbH>

POSTER

<https://bit.ly/30oinUK>

PRESS SCREENER

Available upon editorial request.

FILM MEDIA CONTACT

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ABOUT THE MERATA MITA FELLOWSHIP

The Sundance Institute's Merata Mita Fellowship supports Indigenous artists who identify as women and are endeavoring to direct a feature film. Each year, one artist will be selected as a Merata Mita Fellow. This fellow will be an emerging filmmaker,

seeking to direct a feature film. Recipients will receive a cash grant and a yearlong continuum of support from the Indigenous Programs and Sundance Institute.

Merata Mita (Ngāti Pikiao/Ngāi Te Rangi), served as an artistic director the Sundance Institute's Native Filmmakers Lab and was the first Indigenous woman—and the only Māori woman—to write and direct a dramatic feature film.

ABOUT THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

Facebook: [@Sundance Film Festival](#)

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The Sundance Film Festival has introduced global audiences to some of the most groundbreaking films of the past three decades, including Clemency, Never Rarely Sometimes Always, Zola, On The Record, Boys State, The Farewell, Honeyland, One Child Nation, The Souvenir, The Infiltrators, Sorry to Bother You, Won't You Be My Neighbor?, Hereditary, Call Me By Your Name, Get Out, The Big Sick, Mudbound, Fruitvale Station, Whiplash, Brooklyn, Precious, The Cove, Little Miss Sunshine, An Inconvenient Truth, Napoleon Dynamite, Hedwig and the Angry Inch, Reservoir Dogs and sex, lies, and videotape. The Festival is a program of the non-profit Sundance Institute. 2021 Festival sponsors to date include: Presenting Sponsors – Acura, SundanceTV, Chase Sapphire, Adobe; Leadership Sponsors – Amazon Studios, AT&T, DoorDash, Dropbox, Netflix, Omnicom Group, Southwest Airlines®, WarnerMedia; Sustaining Sponsors – AMC, Audible, Canada Goose, Canon U.S.A., Inc., Dell Technologies, Documentary Plus, GEICO, IMDbPro, Stella Artois®, Unity Technologies, University of Utah Health, White Claw Hard Seltzer, Zoom; Media Sponsors – The Atlantic, IndieWire, Los Angeles Times, NPR, The New York Times, Variety, Vulture, The Wall Street Journal. Sundance Institute recognizes critical support from the State of Utah as Festival Host State. The support of these organizations helps offset the Festival's costs and sustain the Institute's year-round programs for independent artists. sundance.org/festival