

Impact Partners Presents  
A Multitude Films & Inverse Surveillance Project Production  
In Association with Naked Edge Films, Ford Foundation,  
Chicken & Egg Pictures, and Catapult Film Fund



# THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED

Directed by Assia Boundaoui

87 min. | USA | 2018

“REAL-WORLD CONSPIRACY THRILLER” - *Variety*

“RIVETING” - *The New York Times*

“SCINTILLATING” - *The Village Voice*

**Publicity:**

Jessica Devaney

Multitude Films

[jessica@multitudefilms.com](mailto:jessica@multitudefilms.com)

561-373-4701

**Sales:**

Cinetic Media

John Sloss

[sales@cineticmedia.com](mailto:sales@cineticmedia.com)

212-204-7979

## **LOGLINE**

When journalist Assia Boundaoui investigates rumors of surveillance in her Arab-American neighborhood in Chicago, she uncovers one of the largest FBI terrorism probes conducted before 9/11 and reveals its enduring impact on the community.

## **SYNOPSIS**

In the Arab-American neighborhood outside of Chicago where journalist and filmmaker Assia Boundaoui grew up, most of her neighbors think they have been under surveillance for over a decade. While investigating their experiences, Assia uncovers tens of thousands of pages of FBI documents that prove her hometown was the subject of one of the largest counter terrorism investigations ever conducted in the U.S. before 9/11, code-named “Operation Vulgar Betrayal.”

With unprecedented access, **THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED** weaves the personal and the political as it follows the filmmaker’s examination of why her community—including her own family—fell under blanket government surveillance. Assia struggles to disrupt the government secrecy shrouding what happened and takes the FBI to federal court to compel them to make the records they collected about her community public. In the process, she confronts long-hidden truths about the FBI’s relationship to her community.

**THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED** follows Assia as she pieces together this secret FBI operation, while grappling with the effects of a lifetime of surveillance on herself and her family.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED takes a vérité and personal journey storytelling approach while artistically exploring how perspective functions in cinema. Throughout the film, the lens of surveillance is used as a metaphor for the various ways my community, and by extension Muslim-American communities across the country, have been “seen.” By cinematically weaving the personal and the political — often polarized versions of the same story — I hope to capture a profound truth about the “War on Terror”: its impact on our sense of self, our ability to create and connect, our right to dissent, and the impact it’s having on our collective democracy.

The German philosopher Hegel wrote that, "seeing comes before words," and in his writing insists on the impossibility of existence without recognition from the other. Surveillance is in its essence a way of seeing without recognizing, and its harmful effects are profound. Unwarranted surveillance transforms communities into places where neighbors distrust each other, people censor themselves, and everyone lives with an unhealthy dose of fear and paranoia. While surveillance is preconditioned on a great physical distance from the object of its gaze, this film gets intimately closer with the subjects of surveillance who have for so long been seen from afar. I hope this film will serve as a catalyst for radical change that is based on equality, mutual recognition and a way of seeing that is reciprocal.

Throughout THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED I use journalistic tools to investigate a complex political issue that is at the same time deeply personal to me. I believe strongly in the public’s right to know. I believe that our ability to hold government accountable is only as strong as our ability to compel government transparency. In this time of great political turbulence in the U.S., I stand committed to creating art that speaks truth to power and is rooted firmly in the principle of the public’s right to hold its government accountable. I hope that this film will herald a cultural shift in public awareness on issues of government surveillance and national security and contribute meaningfully to ending U.S. government policies that allow the unwarranted profiling of communities of color in America.

– Assia Boundaoui

## FILMMAKER BIOS

### **ASSIA BOUNDAOUI – Director and Producer**

Assia Boundaoui is an Algerian-American journalist and filmmaker based in Chicago. She has reported for BBC, NPR, Al Jazeera, VICE, and CNN and was the recipient of a first place Mark of Excellence Award from the Society of Professional Journalists for her reporting in Yemen. She directed a short film on hijabi hair salons for the HBO LENNY docu-series, which premiered as an official selection of the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. Assia has a Masters degree in journalism from New York University and is fluent in Arabic. THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED is her feature directorial debut.

### **JESSICA DEVANEY – Producer**

JESSICA DEVANEY is a Brooklyn-based producer and the founder of Multitude Films. Recent films include THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED (Tribeca 2018) and ROLL RED ROLL (Tribeca 2018). She also produced the Critic's Choice nominated SPEED SISTERS (Hot Docs, 2015), which the New York Times called "subtly rebellious and defiantly optimistic" and OUT AGAIN (Outfest 2017) for Refinery29's Shatterbox Anthology. Jessica's directorial debut short, LOVE THE SINNER (Tribeca 2017), screened at over 20 festivals and was supported by Sundance, The Harnisch Foundation, Fork Films, The Fledgling Fund, and Chicken & Egg Pictures. Additional credits include CALL HER GANDA (Tribeca 2018), NAILA & THE UPRISING (IDFA 2017), Peabody Award-winning MY NEIGHBOURHOOD (Tribeca 2012), Ridenhour Prize-winning BUDRUS (Berlin, Tribeca 2010). Jessica co-founded the Queer Producers Collective, produced Doc Society's inaugural Queer Impact Producers Lab, and was Sundance Edit and Story Lab Fellow and a Women at Sundance Fellow.

### **RABAB HAJ YAHYA – Editor**

Rabab Haj Yahya is an Emmy-nominated documentary editor and a Sundance Edit and Story Lab Fellow. Her recent work includes the award-winning feature documentary SPEED SISTERS (Hot Docs, 2015), LOVE THE SINNER (Tribeca, 2017) and the web series THE SECRET LIFE OF MUSLIMS (Peabody Finalist, Vox and USA Today, 2016). Rabab has also edited numerous documentaries commissioned by the Al Jazeera Documentary Channel, including ENEMIES OF THE SOUTH (2015), which was featured in multiple prime-time slots on the network. In between projects, she has dedicated a significant amount of her time helping aspiring editors and filmmakers through training and pro-bono consultations in the Middle East, West Africa, and the Balkans. Rabab speaks English, Arabic, and Hebrew fluently and currently lives in New York.

### **SHULING YONG – Director of Photography**

Shuling Yong is a Singapore-born, Chicago-based documentary filmmaker with a passion for social change. She has worked on films like RADICAL GRACE (dir. Rebecca Parrish, 2015), IN TIME TO COME (dir. Tan Pin Pin, 2017), and films by the award-winning Chicago media collective Kartemquin Films such as IN THE GAME (dir. Maria Finitzo, 2015) and AMERICA TO ME (dir. Steve James, 2018). Shuling's most recent film, GROWING ROOTS, premiered on the Discovery Channel. She is now

directing her first feature-length documentary, INTUITION, which was selected for Good Pitch<sup>2</sup> Southeast Asia 2017. Shuling is a Kartemquin Films Diverse Voices in Docs Fellow, a participating filmmaker at the BRITDOC Queer Impact Producers Lab, the DocNet Southeast Asia Strategy Workshop and the KOMAS Video For Change Forum.

### **MOLLY CRABAPPLE – Illustrations**

Molly Crabapple is an artist and writer based in New York. Her memoir, “Drawing Blood,” was published by HarperCollins in 2015. “Brothers of the Gun,” her illustrated collaboration with Syrian war journalist Marwan Hisham, will be published by One World/Penguin Random House in May 2018. Her reportage has been published in the New York Times, New York Review of Books, The Paris Review, Vanity Fair, The Guardian, VICE, and elsewhere. She has been the recipient of a Yale Poynter Fellowship, a Front Page Award, and a Gold Rush Award, and shortlisted for a Frontline Print Journalism Award. She is often asked to discuss her work chronicling the conflicts of the 21st Century, and has appeared on All In with Chris Hayes, Amanpour, NPR, BBC News, PRI, and more. Molly’s art is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Rubin Museum of Art and the New York Historical Society.

### **ANGÉLICA NEGRÓN - Original Music**

Angélica Negrón is a Puerto Rican-born composer and multi-instrumentalist who writes music for accordions, robotic instruments, toys and electronics as well as chamber ensembles and orchestras. Her music has been described as “mesmerizing and affecting” (Feast of Music) while The New York Times noted her “capacity to surprise” and her “quirky approach to scoring.” Her music has been performed at the Bang on a Can Marathon, the Ecstatic Music Festival and the 2016 New York Philharmonic Biennial and she has collaborated with artists like Sō Percussion, loadbang, the Albany Symphony, Face the Music, A Far Cry, and American Composers Orchestra, among others. Angélica is currently a doctoral candidate at The Graduate Center (CUNY), where she studies composition with Tania León and focuses on the work of Meredith Monk for her dissertation. She's a teaching artist for New York Philharmonic's Very Young Composers Program and Lincoln Center Education working with learners of all ages on creative composition projects.

### **IMPACT PARTNERS**

Impact Partners is dedicated to funding independent documentary storytelling that entertains audiences, engages with pressing social issues, and propels the art of cinema forward. Since its inception in 2007, Impact Partners has been involved in the financing of over 90 films, including: ICARUS, which won the 2018 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature; DINA, which won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and was named Best Feature by the International Documentary Association; Otto Bell’s THE EAGLE HUNTRESS, which was nominated for the BAFTA Award for Best Documentary; THE COVE, which won the Academy Award for Documentary Feature; HOW TO SURVIVE A PLAGUE, which was nominated for the Academy Award for Documentary Feature; THE HUNTING GROUND; THE QUEEN OF VERSAILLES, which won the U.S. Directing Award at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival; and HELL AND BACK AGAIN, which won the Documentary Grand Jury Prize and

Cinematography Awards at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for the Academy Award for Documentary Feature. Impact Partners was founded by Dan Cogan and GERALYN DREYFOUS.

## APPEARING IN THE FILM

Assia Boundaoui – Director & Producer  
Rabia Boundaoui – Assia’s Mother  
Iman Boundaoui – Assia’s Sister  
Nouha Boundaoui – Assia’s Sister  
Sohib Boundaoui – Assia’s Brother  
Christina Abraham – Assia’s Lawyer

## CREDITS

### Written, Directed and Produced by

Assia Boundaoui

### Producer

Jessica Devaney

### Director of Photography

Shuling Yong

### Editor

Rabab Haj Yahya

### Illustrations

Molly Crabapple

### Original Music

Angélica Negrón

### Co-Producers

Amel Monsur  
Danieh El-harezi  
Din Clarke  
Anya Rous

### Executive Producers

Jim Butterworth  
Daniel J. Chalfen  
Dan Cogan  
Jenny Raskin  
Geraldyn White Dreyfous  
Debra Mcleod  
Jay K. Sears  
Bill Harnisch  
Ruth Ann Harnisch  
Alexa Poletto  
Michael D. Mann  
Barry W. Rashkover  
Vijay Dewan

### Co-Executive Producer

Christina Abraham