

KINO LORBER

Presents

THE FORCE

A Film by Peter Nicks

U.S. | 2017 | 93 minutes | Documentary | In English

Awards:

Directing Award / U.S. Documentary – Sundance Film Festival
Courage in Cinema Prize – Independent Film Festival Boston
Best Bay Area Documentary – San Francisco International Film Festival.

Festivals:

Sundance Film Festival (World Premiere)
Independent Film Festival Boston
San Francisco International Film Festival
Full Frame Documentary Film Festival
Hot Docs – Canadian International Documentary Festival
CPH:DOX
True/False
AFI DOCS (American Film Institute)
Seattle International Film Festival
Chicago Critics Film Festival
Freep Film Festival (Detroit Free Press)
BAMCinemaFest (New York Premiere)
Human Rights Watch Film Festival

KinoLorber.com | Twitter: @Kinolorber & @TheForcefilm

Press Contacts:

New York

Cinetic Media – Ryan Werner / Charlie Olsky
rtwerner@me.com / charlie@cineticmedia.com
212.204.7951 / (212) 627-9898

Los Angeles

Acme PR – Nancy Willen
nancywillen@acmepr.net
310.963.3433

KINO LORBER

SYNOPSIS

Logline

THE FORCE goes deep inside an embattled urban police department struggling to rebuild trust in one of America's most violent cities at a powder keg moment in American policing.

Synopsis

THE FORCE presents a cinema vérité look inside the long-troubled Oakland Police Department as it struggles to confront federal demands for reform, a popular uprising following events in Ferguson, MO, and an explosive scandal.

A young chief, hailed as a reformer, is brought in to complete the turnaround at the very moment the Black Lives Matter movement emerges to demand police accountability and racial justice both in Oakland and across the nation.

Meanwhile, young cops in the Academy are being trained to police in a new era of transparency and accountability. And out on the street, the camera gets up close as rookie and veteran officers alike face an increasingly hostile public where dueling narratives surround each use of force. Officers are being watched like never before as they respond to a constant flood of 911 calls, revealing the wide gulf between how cops see themselves and how they are seen by the public.

Despite growing public distrust locally, the OPD is garnering national attention as a model of police reform. But just as the department is on the verge of a breakthrough, the man charged with turning the department around faces the greatest challenge of his career, one that could threaten not only the progress that has been made, but the very authority of the institution itself.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I've been holding a camera in my hands since I was 12-years-old. At family reunions, armed with my Uncle Ray's VHS camera, I discovered the feeling of looking through the viewfinder and experiencing life through another point-of-view. I was drawn to the challenge of capturing the personality of the people I knew so well.

My storytelling decisions are directed to a large degree by a desire to tell the stories of the lives of the people I've met on my own journey. For good and bad, these tend to be people who have faced great moral questions and confronted character defining crises.

I believe these are the stories that stimulate conversation, reflect on the human condition and allow audiences to view themselves and the world around them in new ways. The films I respect the most resonate with the authenticity of people who may

KINO LORBER

see life in entirely different ways, but where no one is placed on higher moral ground than the other.

I arrived in Bay Area for film school at UC Berkeley in 1997, after graduating from Howard University. I settled into the Oakland area and discovered this was a place that held the themes, stories and characters that had been such an important part of my life. I've been trying to tell Oakland's story ever since. This city's story is relevant to urgent national conversations we are having about health, justice and community. But it is a story that is also deeply personal.

THE FORCE is the second of a trilogy of films examining these ideas through the lens of public institutions and the communities they serve. This grand narrative examines the interplay between access to health care, criminal justice, and education in one of the most diverse and promising cities in the nation, but also a city burdened by historically record crime rates and persistent poverty. What makes Oakland so vital as a stage for this series is its diverse, engaged citizenry grappling with the big issues of equity and justice that face us all.

My intent with THE FORCE is to reframe people's perceptions of both an urban police department and the community they serve. The film comes at a watershed moment in the evolution of the national conversation about police accountability and reform. And in Oakland, CA, the birthplace of the Black Panthers, that conversation is raw and rooted in a troubled history. This is not a simple story, and it's certainly not just black and white.

THE FORCE takes the audience into the lives of those at the frontline of the national conversation around police accountability in a way that allows various cohorts to hold the power and offer their point-of-view in a manner that doesn't avoid the complexity, but instead embraces it. The film follows efforts of the OPD to meet the requirements of federally mandated reform at a moment when the institution must also answer calls from the community to reduce crime, all in the context of a growing Black Lives Matter movement – and ultimately a shocking scandal that shakes the core of the department's reform efforts.

Each film – and the trilogy as a whole – wrestles with big questions of broad-based institutional, as well as individual, morality that is the binding of any organization. Each film frames these questions in a manner that highlights common themes. My primary goal in my storytelling approach is to allow these different cohorts to hold and argue for their own story. I want my films to allow people to provoke dialogue that may not always be easy. Because in today's noisy social-media-driven world, we often do not truly see or hear one another in a manner that is healthy for democracy.

My purpose is that this trilogy can serve to connect communities in meaningful ways, cutting across ideological barriers through immersive storytelling and reframing polarizing issues in a way that allows us to see each other in new ways.

– Peter Nicks

KINO LORBER

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

THE FORCE is a film that began with a simple idea: to document a long-troubled police department attempting to reform.

We began research and development on the film in April 2013, more than a year before the events in Ferguson, MO, reframed the conversation around police/community relations. Since that time, we filmed at all levels of the department, from the Chief all the way down to the recruits in the Academy. We started filming just when the Ferguson grand jury decision broke, which began what many called “the winter of protest” in Oakland. Protesters were out almost every night, as were the police. But as calls for national police reform became louder with each new officer involved shooting around the country, the decade-long reform efforts of the OPD appeared to be paying off. There were no officer involved shootings for over 20 months--the average was 8 per year--and complaints about officer misconduct were almost half what they were just three years prior. Crime was also down significantly in a city long plagued by high crime rates.

Then, after nearly two years without an officer involved shooting, our cameras documented several officer-involved shootings in the span of just a few months. All involved armed suspects, but differing narratives emerged whether or not the shootings were justified. The film seeks to unpack these complexities as well as the damage these events did to an already fragile trust the Oakland Police Department had been building with the community. The Police Chief emerged as a central character as he sought to guide the department through a mandated reform process that had begun 11 years earlier, as the result of a corruption scandal in 2000 involving civil rights abuses that resulted in a federal consent decree and federal oversight.

We filmed the Chief addressing these long-standing issues while at the same time confronting a string of officer-involved shootings that shook a community already on the edge in the wake of Ferguson and everything that followed. Meanwhile, we filmed an entire police academy for six months, as the fresh recruits learned how to police in this new era of accountability, against the backdrop of the local Black Lives Matter movement and the daily grind that officers face every day on the streets of Oakland.

Then in May of 2016, after we had been editing for over a year, working to weave all these threads into a rough cut, a major scandal broke out at the OPD. Numerous officers were having sex with an underage prostitute, and some were providing her with information about sting operations that enabled her to avoid arrest while potentially putting other officers at risk. The scandal ultimately spread to include seven other law enforcement agencies around the Bay Area and made national news. The woman at the center of the scandal was the daughter of an OPD dispatcher. She saved all her text and Facebook messages and told all to local reporters, naming names, which led to the resignation of at least three OPD officers right after the scandal broke. She even claimed to have texted the Chief's wife about her improper relationships with cops while she

KINO LORBER

was underage. Our central character in the film, chief of police Sean Whent, resigned after these allegations surfaced. But reports suggested that Chief Whent was actually forced out by the federal monitor who did not believe Whent had been aggressive enough to investigate the allegations as they emerged. In short, the department was collapsing and it was national news.

We debated the implications of the events and decided it would be impossible not to address them in the film. We spent the next two months covering unfolding events which saw two more chiefs in quick succession depart for unrelated reasons, revealing a shocking level of instability at the department.

These events had a significant impact on our schedule and the narrative of the film. We needed to film elements of the scandal and community response as they unfolded. Then we needed to figure out a way to incorporate these new developments into a film that was nearly finished. We also had to thematically relate the implications of a sex scandal with the historic racial tensions that have been at the heart of the police/community rift in Oakland and nationwide. We believe we have done that. Our film incorporates these elements into a structural whole that captures American policing at a watershed moment in the national conversation around use of force, abuse of power and the relationship between communities of color and the police. It is a complicated story and we have been humbled by the challenge of telling it.

SUBJECT BIOGRAPHIES

Sean Whent

Former Chief of Police

Whent is a former Chief of the Oakland Police Dept. He was appointed Interim Chief by Mayor Jean Quan in May 2013, replacing Anthony Toribio, who served for only two days following Howard Jordan's resignation. Whent was the permanent (non-interim) police chief from May 2014 to June 2016.

Before becoming Chief, Whent had spent two decades on the force, joining in 1996. Oakland Police Dept. monitor Robert Warshaw forced Whent to resign due to his role in the sexual-misconduct scandal involving Oakland police officers engaging in sex acts with a minor.

Officer Jonathan Cairo

Patrol Officer / Oakland Police Dept. (OPD)

Officer Jonathan Cairo was hired by the Oakland Police Department in 2013. After successfully completing the police academy and field training he was assigned to the patrol division out of the East Oakland Sub Station. After working patrol for two and a half years he was offered a position in the department's Community Resource Office where he is currently assigned to east Oakland. Additionally Officer Cairo is currently pursuing his Bachelor's Degree. Officer Cairo is outgoing and always eager to help.

KINO LORBER

Officer Johnna Watson

Public Information Officer / Oakland Police Dept. (OPD)

Johnna Watson has worked for the City of Oakland since 1992 when she started her career with the Oakland Police Department as a volunteer reserve police officer. After three years of service she was selected to attend Oakland Police Academy as a full time officer.

During her time as a full time officer, Johnna has experienced a wide variety of assignments. They include patrol, Community Policing, walking beat officer and Internal Affairs. Johnna was a field training officer, range master, driving instructor and taught in the academy. She is trained in the dual-purpose motorcycle/bicycle and was certified as a boat operator for the marine unit (as reserve officer).

In 2011, Johnna was selected for her current assignment, Public Information Officer. She has served an unequaled five plus years in this high profile, demanding position. She has been the face of the Oakland Police Department through events like Occupy Oakland, the Oikos University homicides, strife at the Port of Oakland, demonstrations stemming from police actions in other parts of our country, and most recently the Ghost Ship fire tragedy. She has witnessed the growth of social media during her tenure as PIO and assisted OPD in its social media efforts.

Johnna is recognized in the community, by media, law enforcement, Oakland government, and far and wide as someone who can be trusted to provide information in a clear and concise manner.

Ben McBride

Community Liaison / Oakland Police Dept.

Ben is a native of San Francisco and a longtime activist for peace and justice with a history of spiritual leadership, serving multiple congregations across the Bay Area.

In late 2014, Ben became the primary civilian trainer for the Oakland Police Department's Procedural Justice & Police Legitimacy Course. Though the course is facilitated nationally, Ben is the sole community participant currently providing training and consultation to police departments around its implementation, nationally. Ben is deeply committed to rebuilding the relationship between the community and police departments through reform and practice.

Cat Brooks

Community Organizer

The 40-year-old Oakland resident, who also goes by her given name Sheilagh Polk, has emerged as one of the most prominent organizers in the Black Lives Matter movement. Over the past year, Brooks has played a key role staging protests that halted a San Francisco-bound BART train full of Black Friday shoppers, blockaded Oakland's police headquarters and helped end Mayor Libby Schaaf's short-lived effort to crack down on nighttime street marches.

KINO LORBER

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

PETER NICKS

Director, Producer, Writer, Cinematographer

Peter Nicks is an Emmy Award-winning shooter/director known for his courageous cinema vérité style. He directed/produced *The Waiting Room*, which was released theatrically in 2012 to critical acclaim and won numerous awards, including an Independent Spirit Award. Nicks, a 2015 United States Artist Fellow, is in the midst of his trilogy of timely, immersive films exploring the interconnected narratives of health care, criminal justice and education in Oakland, CA.

LINDA DAVIS

Producer, Writer

Linda Davis is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker who produced *The Waiting Room*, a vérité portrait of a day in the life at a public hospital in Oakland, California, which received critical recognition and an Independent Spirit Award nomination for best documentary. She also produced *The Kill Team*, about a soldier in Afghanistan who attempted to report war crimes committed by his platoon, which won Best Documentary Feature at Tribeca in 2013 and was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Investigative Journalism. Her experience includes work on several feature-length documentaries including *The Rape of Europa* and Jon Else's *Wonders Are Many: The Making of Doctor Atomic*.

LAWRENCE LEREW

Editor, Producer, Writer

Lawrence Lerew was nominated for an Emmy for his work on *The Waiting Room*. He studied at the University of Arizona, and has worked on numerous documentary films including *Wounded Knee* (2008), the Oscar-nominated *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers* (2009), and *The Kill Team* (2013).

JON ELSE

Executive Producer

Jon Else made *The Day After Trinity*, *Cadillac Desert: Water and the Transformation of Nature*, *Sing Faster*, and *Wonders Are Many: The Making of Doctor Atomic*. He was series producer on Henry Hampton's *Eyes On The Prize*, producer/director of Hampton's *A Job At Ford's*, co-director with Bonni Cohen of *Inside Guantanamo*, and executive producer on *The Island President*. He has served as cinematographer on hundreds of documentaries, including *Who Are The Debolts* (Academy Award), *Afghanistan: Hell Of A Nation*, and *Food Inc*. Else has extensive experience shooting in Oakland, including work on *Fruitvale Station* and *Tupac: Resurrection*.

KINO LORBER

CREDITS

Directed by
Peter Nicks

Produced by
Linda Davis

Edited by
Lawrence Lerew

Cinematographer
Peter Nicks

Composer
Justin Melland

Associate Producer
Sean Havey

Executive Producer
Jon Else

THE FORCE

A film by Peter Nicks

Produced by
Lawrence Lerew
Peter Nicks

Written by
Linda Davis
Lawrence Lerew
Peter Nicks

Additional Camera
Jon Else
Sean Havey
Mark Oltmanns

Sound Recording by
Lawrence Lerew

KINO LORBER

Additional Sound

Sean Havey
Greg Miller
Lauretta Molitor
Gabe Monts
Erik Neumann
Vanessa Rancano

Assistant Editor

Sean Havey

Production Associate

Pendarvis Harshaw

Supervising Producer for ITVS

David Eisenberg

Consulting Producer for ITVS

Noland Walker

Executive Producer for ITVS

Sally Jo Fifer

Executive Producer for Independent Lens

Lois Vossen

Graphic Design

Mucho

Digital Intermediate

Color A Go-Go / San Francisco

DI Colorist

Kent Pritchett

DI Conform Artist

Geoffrey Orthwein

Online Editor

Loren Sorensen

DI Post Producer

Kim Salyer

DCP

KINO LORBER

Adam Gerardin
Digital Cinema Solutions

Screening Facility

32TEN Studios
San Rafael, CA

Audio Postproduction

Berkeley Sound Artists

Rerecording Mixers

James LeBrecht
Dan Olmsted

Sound Design

James LeBrecht

Dialog Editor

Erik Reimers

SFX Editor

Bijan Sharifi

Sound Editor

Rachel Bain

Mix Stage

Fantasy Film Center in Berkeley, CA
Jeffrey Wood, Studio Director

Advisors

Orlando Bagwell
David Kennedy
David Sklansky

Interns

Nate Burke
Lily Majteles
Danielle Thompson

Legal

Blyth, Lee & Associates

Additional Legal

First Amendment Project

KINO LORBER

Insurance Broker

DeWitt Stern

Sales Agent

Cinetic Media

Publicity

Acme PR

Footage Courtesy

KTOP-TV10, Oakland

Other Materials

KTVU Channel 2 News

ABC News

NBC News

KGO-TV, ABC7

CNN

francetv

KRON4

KNTV, NBC Bay Area

KPIX, CBS Local

Comedy Central

YouTube Footage

FUCK THE POLICE, 650youngD

LA2THEBAY 11/14/2015 OAKLAND TAKEOVER SIDESHOW, dukedogg48

Oakland Sideshows: LA 2 THA BAY 2015, sideshow bob

LA2THEBAY **OAKLAND TAKEOVER

SIDESHOW**SHOOTING**RIOT**POLICE, dukedoggtv

Oakland Sideshow La to the Bay #LatoDaBay Weekend november 2015, snoops tmh

Police Kill Man in Oakland, diaz1990miguel

PRINT SOURCES

The New York Times

“Police Rethink Long Tradition on Using Force”

Written by Matt Apuzzo

May 4, 2015

The Economist

“Too Many Chiefs”

June 25, 2016

POLITICO Magazine

“How a Dirty Police Force Gets Clean”

Written by Scott C. Johnson

KINO LORBER

March/April 2015

San Francisco Chronicle

“Oakland Police Chief Out After Pushing Back, Sources Say”

Written by Matier and Ross

June 12, 2016

East Bay Express

“Did An Oakland Cop Kill His Wife?”

Written by Darwin BondGraham and Ali Winston

November 8, 2016

East Bay Times

“Oakland Police Sex Scandal: Interim Chief Ben Fairow Out After Five Days”

Written by Bay Area News Group, David DeBolt and Matthias Gafni

June 15, 2016

Transcription Services

Heather J. Larsen

Special Thanks

Philip Arca

Raney Aronson-Rath

Kris Bowers

Maida Brankman

Cat Brooks

David Brotherton

Brian Burke

Peter Burke

John Burriss

Larry Butler

Julie Caskey

Andrew Catauro

Tammy Chan

Bonni Cohen

Dale Cohen

FX Crowley

John Davies

Erica Terry Derryck

Doug Dunderdale

Jennifer Eberhardt

David & Minette Eckles

Philipp Engelhorn

Kristin Feeley

Ken Garkow

James Gassel

KINO LORBER

Leah Giblin
Abby Ginzberg
Kevin Grant
Melinda Haag
Craig Harwood
Thelton Henderson
Kristin Hull
Diane Ives
Tabitha Jackson
Justine Jacob
Chris Jenkins
Niema Jordan
Mitch Kapor
Sara Kiener
Lisa Kleiner-Chanoff
Gabriel Kra
Dan Krauss
Caroline Libresco
John Lightfoot
Don Link
Phil Lorin
Cara Mertes
Ben Mulholland
Michael Munson
John Mutz
Vanna Nicks
Lauren Pabst
Arnold Perkins
Jean Quan
Michael Raisler
Ali Ar Rasheed
Jose Rodriguez
Jeff Rosenberg
Camille Servan-Schreiber
Courtney Sexton
Jon Shenk
Amir Soltani
Daniel Stein
Michele Turnure-Salleo
Rahdi Taylor
Patricia Van Hook
John Van Wyck
Ephraim Walker
Wendy Williams
Chi-hui Yang

KINO LORBER

Thanks to the City of Oakland and all the people who made this film possible.

Major funding for this program was provided by

Ford Foundation JustFilms
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Additional funding provided by

Cinereach
Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program
with support from
Open Society Foundations
Ford Foundation JustFilms
The Kendeda Fund
CNN Films Fellowship
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Cal Humanities
Catapult Film Fund
Kapor Center for Social Impact
San Francisco Film Society
The Filmmaker Fund
Gucci Tribeca Documentary Fund
Nancy Blachman & David desJardins
Threshold Foundation
Sundance Institute Catalyst

Color-A-Gogo /// "Edited on Premiere" /// Cinetic

www.theforcefilm.com

THE FORCE is a co-production of Open'hood, Inc. and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), in association with Ford Foundation JustFilms.

PBS

THE FORCE is produced by Open'hood, Inc. which is solely responsible for its content.