

Making the Cut: Asian Documentary Filmmakers and the 2019 Oscars

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Jimmy Chin is a director, producer and cinematographer. *Free Solo* and *Meru* (2015) – which were both co-directed by Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi – grew out of his passion as a professional climber, skier and mountaineer. For 20 years, Chin has led cutting-edge climbing and ski expeditions on all seven continents. He made the first and only American ski descent from the summit of Mount Everest. Chin is a *National Geographic* photographer and has won awards for work in the *New York Times Magazine*, *Vanity Fair* and *Outside* magazine, among others. He has also directed commercials for clients such as Apple, Chase and The North Face.

Bing Liu is a Chicago-based director and cinematographer whom *Variety* listed as one of 10 documentary filmmakers to watch. *Minding the Gap* has won numerous honors, including the Breakthrough Filmmaking Award at Sundance Film Festival, the Audience Award at Full Frame Film Festival and Best Documentary at Sarasota Film Festival. Liu was a segment director on *America To Me*, a 10-hour documentary series on Starz examining racial inequities in America's education system. He has a B.A. in Literature from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Nicholas Ma is a writer, director and producer based in New York. In addition to producing *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, he is currently in development on a documentary series on diplomacy. Beyond his film projects, Ma regularly consults for artistic figures and organizations. He left McKinsey & Company in 2013, where he led large-scale transformations of public and private entities. A graduate of Harvard College, he previously worked in Washington, D.C. for then-Senator John Kerry, overseeing his global economic portfolio on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Diane Quon returned to her hometown of Chicago after nearly two decades in Los Angeles, where she worked at NBC and Paramount, most recently as Vice President of Marketing. Beyond *Minding the Gap*, she is producing other documentaries with Kartemquin Films (*Hoop Dreams*, *Life Itself*), including *Left-Handed Pianist* with *Chicago Tribune* arts critic Howard Reich, and co-directed by Leslie Simmer and Kartemquin founder Gordon Quinn; and *The Dilemma of Desire* with Peabody Award-winning director Maria Finitzo. Quon is also developing a fictional film based on a *New York Times* best-seller.

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Sandi Tan directed, produced, wrote and appears in *Shirkers*, which premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. Born in Singapore, she started as a writer, publishing a cult zine called *The Exploding Cat* at the age of 16 and later working as the film critic for the *Straits Times*. Tan then studied film at Columbia University. Her short films, *Moveable Feast* and *Gourmet Baby*, have played at over 100 film festivals. She is the author of *The Black Isle*, a novel that re-imagines Singapore's 20th century as a ghost story. Tan has received several filmmaking fellowships and now lives in Pasadena.

Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi co-directed and produced *Free Solo* with Jimmy Chin. Her award-winning career includes *Meru* (Oscars Shortlist 2016; Sundance Audience Award 2015); *Incorruptible* (Truer Than Fiction Independent Spirit Award 2016); *Youssou N'Dour: I Bring What I Love*; *A Normal Life* (Tribeca Film Festival Best Documentary 2003); and *Touba* (SXSW Special Jury Prize Best Cinematography 2013). Vasarhelyi has directed a *New York Times* Op Doc, an episode for Netflix's design series *Abstract* and two episodes for ESPN's new series *Enhanced*. She has received prestigious filmmaking grants and earned a B.A. in Comparative Literature from Princeton.

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