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PRESENT

THE GRAB

A film by Gabriela Cowperthwaite

2024 | U.S. | 104 minutes

Official Selection

2022 Toronto International Film Festival – World Premiere
2022 Mill Valley Film Festival
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FINAL PRESS NOTES

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SYNOPSIS

Quietly and seemingly out of sight, governments, private investors and mercenaries are working to seize food and water resources at the expense of entire populations. These groups are establishing themselves as the new OPEC, where the future world powers will be those who control not oil, but food.

And it's all beginning to bubble to the surface in real time. Global food prices have hit an all-time high, threatening chaos and violence. Meanwhile, Russia is using food as a weapon against the Ukrainians, and as a geopolitical tool to wield global power.

THE GRAB is a global thriller combining hard-hitting journalism from The Center for Investigative Reporting with the compelling character-driven storytelling of director Gabriela Cowperthwaite, taking you around the globe from Arizona to Zambia, to reveal one of the world's biggest and least known threats.



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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Gabriela Cowperthwaite here, just reaching out to thank you so much for your interest in our documentary, **THE GRAB**.

My last documentary, *Blackfish*, took the wind out of me. The film struck a nerve and as exciting as that was, it was also overwhelming and made me realize how careful we have to be when we choose our projects.

After *Blackfish*, I took a short break from documentary film. I had encountered plenty of films I wanted to do, but very few that I needed to do. Until now.

The Grab is an investigative thriller that aims to explain the world, to expose the “business as usual” cracks, to break down some darkly powerful inner-workings while focusing on the humans who absorb every punch in real time.

In a time where the world can feel confusing and dim, our hope is that this 6-year investigative deep dive of a film can help explain, unite, galvanize and entertain people from all walks of life and from all corners of the world.

- Director Gabriela Cowperthwaite



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ABOUT THE REPORTERS

Nate Halverson

Nate Halverson is an Emmy Award-winning senior reporter and producer at The Center for Investigative Reporting, covering business and finance with an emphasis on the global food system. He has reported across the world, including Russia, Guatemala, England, Zambia, China, and Venezuela, and on investigative topics ranging from financial fraud and organized crime to uncovering and reporting on internal company documents that helped result in people receiving a \$155 million settlement from the tech company. Halverson broke the international news that California was literally sinking, a result of farmers over-pumping groundwater in the drought stricken Central Valley. He revealed the Saudi government's plan to support the acquisition of food and water resources around the world from Argentina to the parched deserts of Arizona. He reported on classified cables from the U.S. State Department that detailed the growing anxiety of wealthy countries about looming water and food shortages.

JoeBill Muñoz

JoeBill Muñoz is a Mexican-American director and producer. He's currently working on a series with Left/Right Media in collaboration with The New York Times, and directing and producing an independent feature documentary about solitary confinement. His work has been supported by the Sundance Documentary Fund, Firelight Media, ITVS, SFFILM, the Reva and David Logan Foundation, and others. His directorial debut, Follow the Sun, captures the stories of Central Americans making their way to the US through Mexico. Follow the Sun was released by NBC Digital, screened in festivals across the country, and nominated for an award by the International Documentary Association. As a producer, cinematographer, and journalist he has worked with the Center for Investigative Reporting, Frontline, the Investigative Reporting Program, The Associated Press, KQED, and ESPN. Originally from Texas, he resides in New York City.

Mallory Newman

Mallory Newman is an investigative reporter and associate producer on The Grab. She's an alumni of UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism who holds a BA in International Relations from San Francisco State University. She was an enlisted Military Police Officer and Civil Affairs Officer in the Marine Corps Reserve from 2007-2014 and deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom to Musa Qalah, Afghanistan in 2011. Her background includes traveling videography for the 2019 presidential primaries,



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logistics work as a government contractor, and over a decade of customer service work in hotels and restaurants. And she loves dogs. A lot.

David Ritsher

David Ritsher is the senior editor for TV and documentaries for The Center for Investigative Reporting. He has produced and edited award-winning investigative documentaries for over 25 years, on subjects ranging from the illicit trade in nuclear weapons materials in Russia to Latino gangs in Northern California to pioneering microlending start-ups. At CIR, the projects he has worked on include Pulitzer Prize finalists and winners of duPont, Edward R. Murrow, and National Headliner Awards, and multiple Emmys. He has edited and produced broadcast television pieces for PBS NewsHour, KQED, Al Jazeera English, The Young Turks, ABC, and co-produced the four-hour public television series “Reveal,” with Oregon Public Broadcasting and the National Educational Television Association. For almost a decade he was the Coordinating Producer/Editor for the PBS series Frontline/World, which itself won multiple Emmy Awards, Webby Awards and the Edward R. Murrow Award.

Emma C. Schwartz

Emma Schwartz is a multimedia producer and filmmaker based in Brooklyn, New York. She holds a masters in Documentary Filmmaking from the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, and has over ten years of experience producing and shooting for magazines, television and independent documentaries. In recent years, she’s worked on projects with Frontline, CNN, Netflix, GQ Magazine, TIME, PBS, The Washington Post, The Center for Investigative Reporting and Bon Appétit, among others. Outside of the United States, she has produced work in Zambia, India, Argentina, Singapore, Dominican Republic, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Ukraine and Nicaragua.



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ABOUT THE SUBJECTS

Holly Irvin

Holly Irvin, a Supervisor in La Paz County, Ariz, has been fighting back against companies exporting water from her community since 2015, when The Center for Investigative Reporting revealed foreign investors were targeting her desert community for its unregulated water. She asked Arizona's governor to put in place protections to stop investors from overusing her community's water, and asked the federal government to investigate water profiteering. But to date, neither the state nor federal government have taken actions to intervene. The water situation in her county continues to deteriorate.

Brigadier "Brig" Siachitema

Brigadier "Brig" Siachitema - Born in rural Zambia, Brigadier Siachitema rose to the top ranks of international lawyers, attending Georgetown Law School in the United States, and getting a Masters Degree from Oxford University in England. He returned to Africa to protect the land rights of indigenous communities who are bearing the brunt of a global push for farmland. His work at the Southern African Litigation Center has given him a voice at the African Union, even as his daily struggles put his life in jeopardy as he faces reprisal from the wealthy and the powerful.



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ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Gabriela Cowperthwaite, Writer / Director / Producer

Gabriela Cowperthwaite has been directing both documentaries and narrative films for over 20 years, rising to prominence with the 2013 release of *Blackfish*, which examined the plight of orcas and their trainers at SeaWorld. *Blackfish* quickly became one of the highest grossing documentaries of all time, amassing over 100 million viewers worldwide and helping to permanently change the captive industry. In addition to being shortlisted for an Academy Award, *Blackfish* was nominated for a BAFTA, a Broadcast Critics' Awards, an International Documentary Association Award, and won the Satellite Award for Best Feature. Most recently, Gabriela completed *ISS*, a space station thriller starring Academy Award winner Arianna DeBose. *ISS* is scheduled for release in 2023. Her critically acclaimed film *Our Friend*, starring Casey Affleck, Dakota Johnson, and Jason Segel was released in 2020. Based on a true life story, *Our Friend* told the story of a couple struggling through a cancer diagnosis alongside their best friend. *Megan Leavey*, which marked Gabriela's narrative directorial debut in 2015 is based on the true life story of a Marine corporal (Kate Mara), whose unique bond with her military combat dog saved many lives during their deployment in Iraq.

Nate Halverson, Producer

(See above)

Amanda Pike, Producer

Amanda Pike is an Emmy, Peabody and duPont Award-winning journalist and producer, and the Director of TV and Documentaries at The Center for Investigative Reporting. She recently produced *Victim/Suspect* for Netflix, which premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival in the U.S. documentary competition. She executive produced the Oscar-nominated short documentary *Heroin(e)* for Netflix. She was executive producer of the inaugural year of the Glassbreaker Films initiative, supporting women-identifying filmmakers and journalists. Before joining CIR, she spent several years reporting and producing documentaries around the world for PBS, CBS, ABC, National Geographic, A&E, Lifetime and The Learning Channel, among others. Pike also has dabbled in fiction filmmaking, producing the short film *On the Assassination of the President*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.



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Blye Faust, Producer

Blye Faust is an Academy and Emmy Award-winning producer. Her credits include *Spotlight*, which was awarded Best Motion Picture and Best Original Screenplay at the 2016 Academy Awards, and went on to gross nearly \$100 million at the worldwide box office during its release. She most recently produced the hit Amazon docuseries *LuLaRich* and is currently in production with the *LuLaRich* team on another multi-part series for Amazon. Other documentary credits include Emmy Award-winning and Peabody nominee *Belly of the Beast* and Emmy and Critic's Choice Award nominee *Rewind*. In addition to her work as a producer, she is a ReFrame Rise sponsor and a member of the SFFILM Creative Advisory Board and the Creative Future Leadership Committee. Other board memberships have included The Center for Investigative Reporting, and she is a member of the Producers Guild of America and the State Bar of California.

Nicole Rocklin, Producer

Nicole Rocklin is the Oscar winning producer of *Spotlight*, the riveting true story behind the Pulitzer Prize-winning Boston Globe investigation of the Boston Archdiocese. At the 2016 Academy Awards, the film won Best Motion Picture and Best Screenplay. Her other producing credits include the *Untitled Lizzo Documentary* (directed by Doug Pray to be released by HBO Max), *The Perfect Guy* (directed by Dave Rosenthal starring Sanaa Lathan, Michael Ealy and Morris Chestnut) that opened number one at the box office it's opening weekend and *Middle of Nowhere* (directed by John Stockwell starring Anton Yelchin, Eva Amurri, Justin Chatwin, Willa Holland and Susan Sarandon). She started her entertainment career as an assistant at Jerry Bruckheimer Films and graduated with honors with a B.A. in History and African American Studies from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Producers Guild of America, and the Creative Future Leadership Committee.

Jenny Raskin, Executive Producer

Jenny Raskin is the executive director of Impact Partners. She has worked as a documentary producer, director, series producer, and executive producer. Her credits include *Step* (executive producer), *Dina* (executive producer), *Trophy* (executive producer), *Our Nixon* (executive producer), *Here Come the Videofreex* (director/producer), *Motherland Afghanistan* (producer), *On Hostile Ground* (director/producer), and more. She received a B.A. from Barnard College and an M.A. from the Culture & Media Program at NYU.



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Geralyn Dreyfous, Executive Producer

Geralyn Dreyfous has a wide, distinguished background in the arts, extensive experience in consulting in the philanthropic sector, and participates on numerous boards and initiatives. She is the Founder and Board Chair of the Utah Film Center, a non-profit that curates free screenings and outreach programs for communities throughout Utah.

In 2007, she co-founded Impact Partners Film Fund with Dan Cogan, bringing together financiers and filmmakers so that they can create great films that entertain audiences, enrich lives, and ignite social change. Since its inception, IP has been involved in the financing of over 70 films. Geralyn is also a founding member of Gamechanger, the first for-profit film fund dedicated exclusively to financing narrative features directed by women.

Geralyn's independent executive producing and producing credits include the Academy Award winning *Born Into Brothels*; Emmy nominated *The Day My God Died*, Academy Award nominated and Emmy winning *The Square*, Academy Award nominated and Peabody Award winning *The Invisible War*, and multiple film festival winners such as *Miss Representation*, *Meet the Patels*, *Anita*, *In Football We Trust*, *The Hunting Ground*, *Dreamcatcher*, *Alive Inside*, *Bending the Arc*, *STEP*, *The Judge* and *Be Natural*. Geralyn has been recognized by *Variety* and the International Documentary Association for her significant contribution to documentary filmmaking.

Dan Cogan, Executive Producer

Dan Cogan is one of the most prominent non-fiction producers working today. Both an Academy Award®- and Emmy Award®-winner, Dan founded Story Syndicate with Liz Garbus in 2019. Previously, Dan was the founding Executive Director of Impact Partners. He has produced more than 100 films and series, including *Icarus*, which won the 2018 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature; *Allen v. Farrow* nominated for an Emmy in 2021;

Won't You Be My Neighbor?, which won the 2019 Independent Spirit Award for Best Documentary; *The Cove*, which won the 2010 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature; and *The Apollo*, which won the 2020 Emmy for Outstanding Documentary.



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Davis Coombe, Editor

Davis Coombe is an award-winning editor, writer, and producer. He shot, edited and produced *The Last Campaign of Governor Booth Gardner*, which was nominated for an Academy Award in 2009 and broadcast on HBO. In 2011, Coombe produced and edited *Saving Face*, which won the Oscar for Best Short Documentary in 2012. He also edited *Chasing Ice*, which premiered at Sundance in 2012 and was shortlisted for an Academy award. In 2013, he won two Emmys for Editing and Best Documentary at the News and Documentary Emmys. He co-wrote and edited *Keep on Keepin' On* (shortlisted for an Academy Award) and *Beyond the Brick: A Lego Brickumentary*, which both premiered at the 2014 TriBeCa Film Festival. He co-produced, co-wrote and edited *Being Evel*, which premiered in competition at Sundance in 2015. In 2016, he edited *Casting JonBennet* and *Chasing Coral*, both premiering in the US Documentary competition at Sundance 2017. His recent work includes *Liyana*, a documentary/animation hybrid which has won the audience or jury prize at 22 festivals, *The Rescue List*, which aired on PBS's POV, and *The Social Dilemma*, which has become one of the most popular documentaries ever to stream on Netflix.



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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

The Center for Investigative Reporting is a nonprofit, multi-platform news organization dedicated to engaging and empowering the public through investigative journalism and groundbreaking storytelling. Founded in 1977, CIR's journalists hold the powerful accountable and reveal government misbehavior, human rights violations and threats to public safety. CIR combines its innovative and creative approach with the structure of a large experienced newsroom, and the firepower of dozens of seasoned reporters, producers and editors.

CIR produces the national weekly radio show and podcast *Reveal*, which appears on more than 600 stations across the country. Recent awards include an Academy Award nomination, multiple national News and Documentary Emmys, Edward R. Murrow Awards, Alfred I. DuPont Awards, a George Foster Peabody Award, a George Polk Award and MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, among others. However, CIR primarily measures success through the impact of its stories. Recent investigations have resulted in new laws, sparked reform and resonated at the highest levels of government.



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CREDITS

Impact Partners Presents

A production of
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and Rocklin|Faust

A Film by Gabriela Cowperthwaite

THE GRAB

Directed and Written by
Gabriela Cowperthwaite

Produced by
Nathan Halverson
Amanda Pike

Produced by
Blye Pagon Faust
Nicole Rocklin

Produced by
Gabriela Cowperthwaite

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Yinuo Shi

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Shawn Fonseka

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David Lopez (Venezuela)



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Assistant Sound Editor: Anthony Di Marco

Audio Post Supervisor: Michel Holbrook, CAS

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Visual Effects Artist: Julie Henninger

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Score recorded at Many Rooms Music, New York

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Michelle Ross - Violin

Nathan Schram - Viola

Michael Nicolas - Cello

Jeff Beal - Piano & Electronics

Produced and Mixed by Jeff Beal

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Ruptly

United Nations

The views in the film are not those of the United Nations.

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