

2024

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

In The Mountain

**A FILM BY
ANYA RAZA**

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A man and a woman are shown in profile, facing each other. The man is on the left, wearing a dark shirt, and the woman is on the right, also in a dark shirt. They are positioned in front of a red background with a repeating circular pattern. The woman's hands are clasped together near the man's face. The title 'Logline, Synopsis & Trailer' is written in a large, white, cursive font across the middle of the image.

Logline, Synopsis & Trailer

Logline: Rabia is put to the test when she is forced to choose between saving the life she once knew, and protecting those she loves and leaving it all behind.

Synopsis: ON THE MOUNTAIN is the story of Rabia Noori, an English teacher from Kabul, and the impossible choice she has to make to save her family. A poetic drama inspired by true events.

Official Trailer: https://youtu.be/w2B_iVUpog?si=fjQEGe9sGfS9m1fr

Director's note

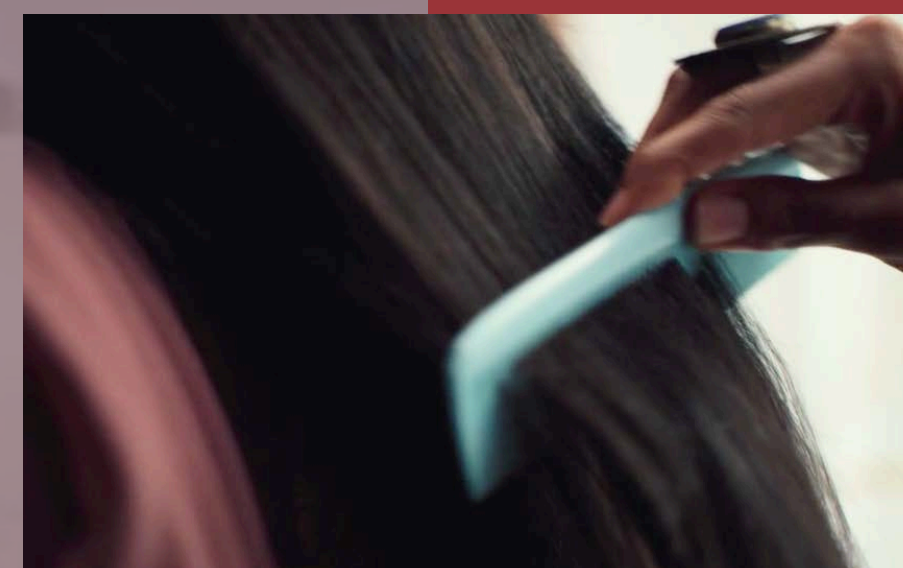
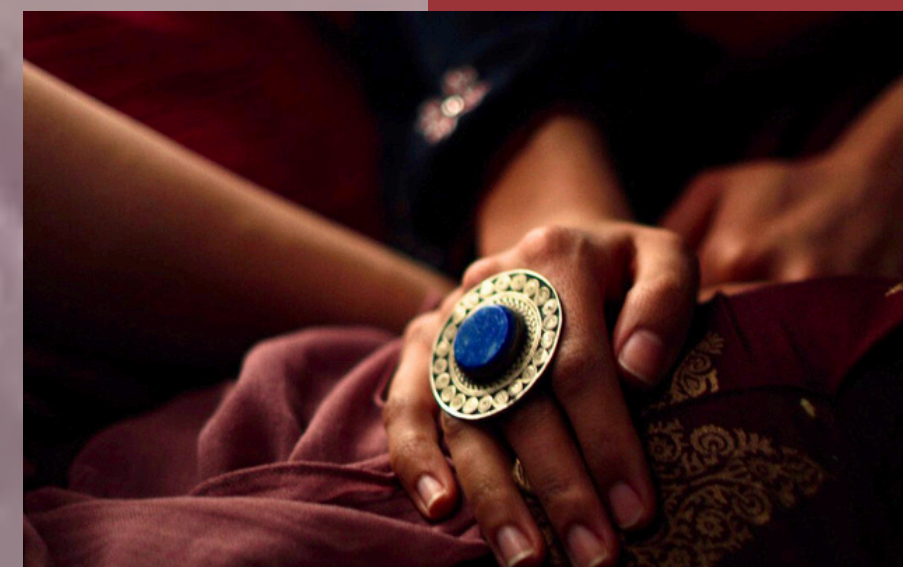
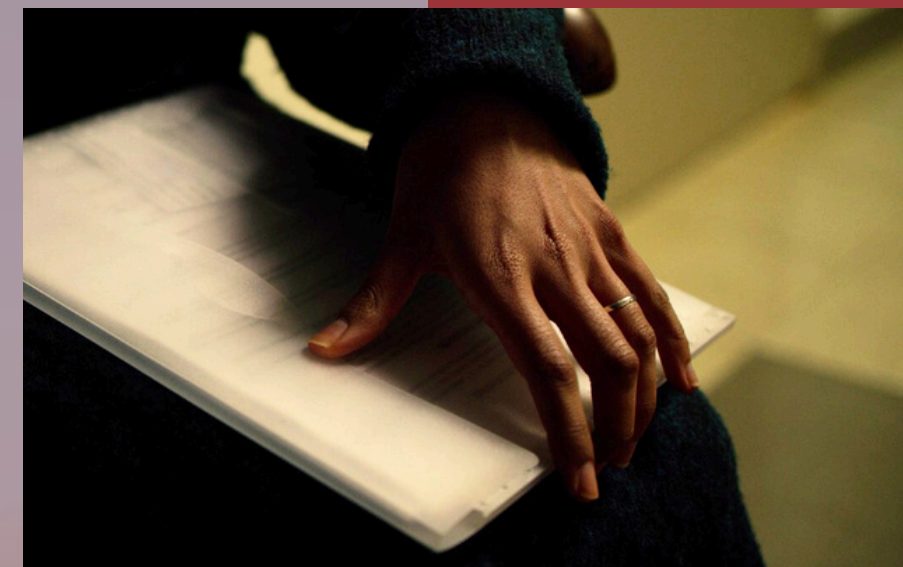
ON THE MOUNTAIN is a slice of life into one of the many agonizing choices refugees have had to make when escaping danger. As a Pakistani-Dutch woman, I was raised between two cultures, therefore stories that span the gray areas of patriarchy and identity have always intrigued me. I was living in Washington DC when the U.S. Army withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021. Despite being in the capital of the United States, stories of devastation and unfulfilled promises barely made headlines. My best friend was working as a Pashto interpreter at a military base, and would tell me of the heart wrenching choices families had to make as they fled Afghanistan.

Raised in Pakistan, I remember all too well the day the planes hit the twin towers in New York, and the two decades of devastation that followed in Afghanistan and its borders. Millions of Afghan refugees escaped war and poverty, leaving all they had ever known, in an attempt to survive. As a result, now nearly 8.2 million Afghans live in 103 countries around the world.

Spurred by decades of untold stories of Afghan heroes, I wrote this screenplay in consultation with multiple case workers supporting the 125,000 (and counting) Afghan refugees resettling in the U.S. Our protagonist was inspired by the 14th C. Afghan poet, Rabia Balkhi, a hero - who defied power and injustice, and a martyr - who gave her life to divine love.

With nearly an all Afghan cast, and crew with personal relationship with resettlement, we have worked hard to make every aspect of this film authentic, and believe it is now in a position to be shared globally and spark a conversation on compassion in times of incomprehensible refugee crises.

We hope this film will spark dialogue, awareness and help mobilize resources for the many Afghans whose lives are starting from scratch. For Afghan women in particular, the culture shock can be immense, and so welcoming refugees with compassion, curiosity and support about their journey, can make all the difference in how they land in a new country, and the choices they make moving forward.




Facts & Figures

UNHCR estimates more than **1.6 million Afghans** have fled the country since the Taliban takeover in 2021.

In 2023, there were at least **8.2 million Afghans hosted across 103 different countries** - one of the largest protracted refugee situations in the world.


Conservatively, **over 38 million people** have been displaced by conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, Libya, and Syria since September 11, 2001.

Any number is limited in what it can convey about displacement's damage. The people behind the numbers can be difficult to see, and **numbers cannot communicate how it feels to lose one's home, belongings, community, and much more.** Displacement has caused incalculable harm to individuals, families, towns, cities, regions, and entire countries physically, socially, emotionally, and economically.

A silhouette of a person's head and shoulders in profile, looking out a window. The window is covered with light-colored curtains featuring a subtle floral or scroll pattern. The sides of the frame show the edges of the curtains, which have a darker, more intricate pattern. The lighting is soft, coming from the window, creating a contemplative mood.

“True love can mean sacrificing
everything for the ones you love.”

بعضی وقت عشق واقعی به معنی قربانی کردن همه
چیز به کسی است که دوست اش دارید



Goal: Our goal is to shed light on the importance of keeping families together, and advocate for the need for greater compassion and specialized resources as we support refugee families with their journey.

What's next?



Since starting our global festival tour, ON THE MOUNTAIN has travelled from DC to Chicago, opened 8 cities in Lebanon, followed by Albania, London, and heading back to North America in August, where we have been nominated for Best Short Film! We also have screenings lined up with non-profits working on refugee related matters, including a national screening tour with the support of our award-winning impact partner, [Picture Motion](#) and Taleem Project.

Building on the knowledge that local communities help new refugees thrive, our marketing strategy will consist of select film festival screenings and non-profit, community and academic activations, utilizing the strong partnerships we have with grassroots organizations supporting refugees.

We will also provide a toolkit which will allow for the audience to learn more and take action by connecting with legislators about the Afghan Adjustment Act, as well as steps on how to support their local refugee communities. For Afghan women in particular, the culture shock can be immense, and so welcoming refugees with compassion, curiosity and support about their journey, can make all the difference in how they land in a new country, and the choices they make moving forward.



Take Action

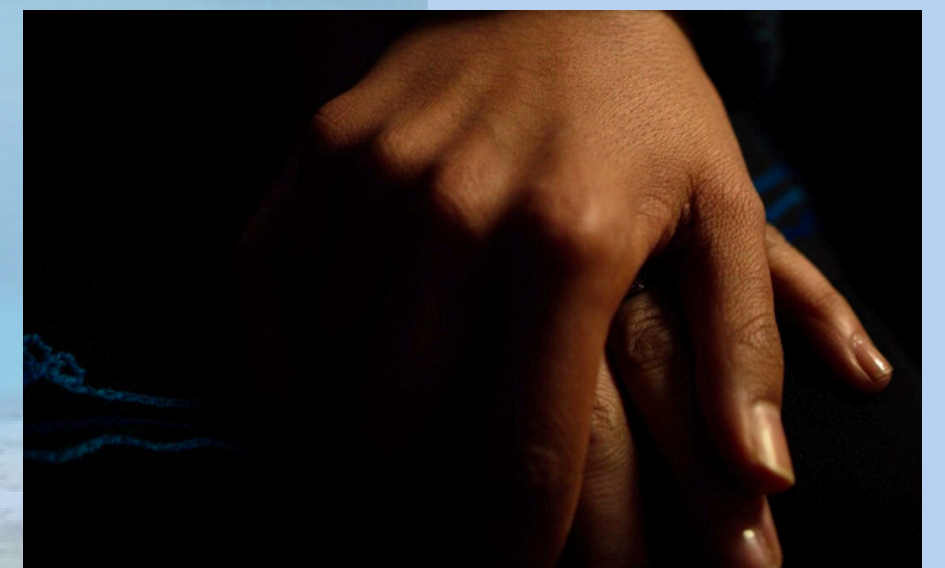
PICTURE
MOTION
TALEEM
PROJECT

We are excited to share such a tender and complex story, and hope ON THE MOUNTAIN will educate audiences, evoke empathy, and spark action in the midst of continued social and political grappling for why and how we can better support Afghans following the devastating withdrawal of the U.S. military from Afghanistan in August 2021.

This historic moment is an opportunity to encourage a culture of welcoming and embracing diversity in the US through advocating for greater compassion and resources as we support refugee families through their journey to their new home.

Learn & Take Action:

1. Tell President Biden: [Reunite Refugee Families Now!](#)
2. Find out how u can [support refugees in your own community](#)
3. Help pass the [Afghan Adjustment Act](#).



A romantic scene featuring the silhouettes of a man and a woman in profile, facing each other. They are positioned against a bright, glowing sunset sky with a large, radiant sun. In the background, a cityscape is visible, with a prominent tower and lights reflecting on water. The overall mood is serene and intimate.

کوه هر چقه بلن باشه ، بازم سر خود راه داره

“No matter how tall the mountain, there is still a way.”

Cast & Crew

Our cast consisted of six incredibly talented actors, four of whom are Afghan-American. Many of our talented crew members have personal relationship and interest in immigration, refugees and resettlement, as well as Army veterans, some who served in Afghanistan.

Rabia Noori - Awesta Zarif
Zaki Noori - Sayed Akbari
Marwa Noori - Maryam Yourish
Moira - Barbara Zablocky
Sami - Abdullah Amin
Officer Mantilla - Matthew Gibeson
Newscaster - Mariam Zaidi

Writer & Director: Anya Raza
Producers: Anya Raza, Baktash Ahadi & Hila Hamidi
Executive Producers: Baktash Ahadi & Sol Guy
Editors: Michael Rothermel, Ahmad Samara & Anya Raza
Director of Photography: Fernando Rocha
Co-producer: Bryan Gordon & Joseph Terranova
Associate Producer: Aisha Azimi
Associate Producer: Wagma Isaczai
Art Director: Katy Grossman
Assistant Director: Satchitananda Hover
Assistant Camera: David Lotfi
Assistant Editor: Haider Zafar
Sound: Steve Fixel
Grip: Jen Stoughton
Grip #2: Bria Granville
Grip #3: Scout Pruski
Set-hand: Jacob Audouin
Story consultants: Gulmina Mahmud & Ann Singer
Translator: Habib Rehman
Artist: Musab Rehman

How We Told This Story

This film was made by a diverse and vibrant cast and crew from around the world. Many have personal relationship and interest in immigration, refugees and resettlement, and have infused their passion into this film every step of the way.

It started with our selfless story consultants, Gulmina and Ann, who were working at military bases in the US where Afghan refugees were hosted temporarily as they arrived from Kabul. It was an emotional, hectic time, right after the Taliban takeover, and an abrupt end of a twenty year war. As interpreters and case workers, they absorbed the choices and emotions of the people they were supporting. Hearing their stories spurred me to write ON THE MOUNTAIN.

Early in development, Aisha & Wagma from American University's Afghan Student Association, joined as Associate Producers. Our translator Habib, who came as a refugee to the U.S. in Oct. '21, worked diligently to create authentic Dari dialogue with Kabul colloquialism. His children, ages 6 and 4, drew drawings for the case room scene, inspired by their journey as refugees escaping Kandahar. When location scouting, the Azimis offered their home in DMV as set for our Kabul scenes. Our sound mixer, Steve, served in Afghanistan for several tours. Our DP Fernando, is currently working on a feature about coyotes along the US Southern border.

Our cast consisted of six incredibly talented actors, four of whom are Afghan-American and have their own refugee journeys to the US. Our lead actor Awesta, who plays Rabia, continues to tell Afghan stories on screen and on stage, and is currently the lead for the national show, the 'Kiterunner'. Our lead actor Sayed, had worked as a translator with the US military in Kabul, and now works as an Assistant Professor in Texas.

In post-production, we were joined by Executive Producer Baktash Ahadi, who recently won three Emmys with his documentary Retrograde, about the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. One of our editors Ahmad, is a refugee from Palestine, and worked carefully to structure the story based on his intimate experience as a child.

We have worked hard to make every aspect of this film authentic, and believe it is now in a position to be shared globally and spark a conversation on compassion in times of incomprehensible refugee crises.

Anya Raza

Anya Raza is a Pakistani-Dutch writer, filmmaker and economist. Moved by the human spirit, Anya works at the nexus of art and justice, and has over a decade of experience telling stories, distilling complex messages and finding commonality in grey areas. Her thought-provoking, poetic and sometimes humorous stories aim to break stereotypes, encourage critical thinking and catalyze change. Anya believes deeply in building community.

Her stories have a focus on quieter voices, supporting social justice themes of freedom of expression, economic empowerment, equal rights and humanitarian causes, amongst others. Her debut documentary on dance and activism in Pakistan, How She Moves (2020), toured 26 film festivals globally, and won seven 'Best Documentary' awards.

Her last film Still Here (2022), advocated for support for survivors of torture globally, and received critical acclaim from human rights experts. Anya's films *Asma* and *Stars* are in post-production. She is a proud member of Brown Girl Doc Mafia, Video Consortium & stand-up comedy troupe Auratnaak.

Anya has an MA in Film & Media Production from American University and an MSc in Economics from the University of Amsterdam.



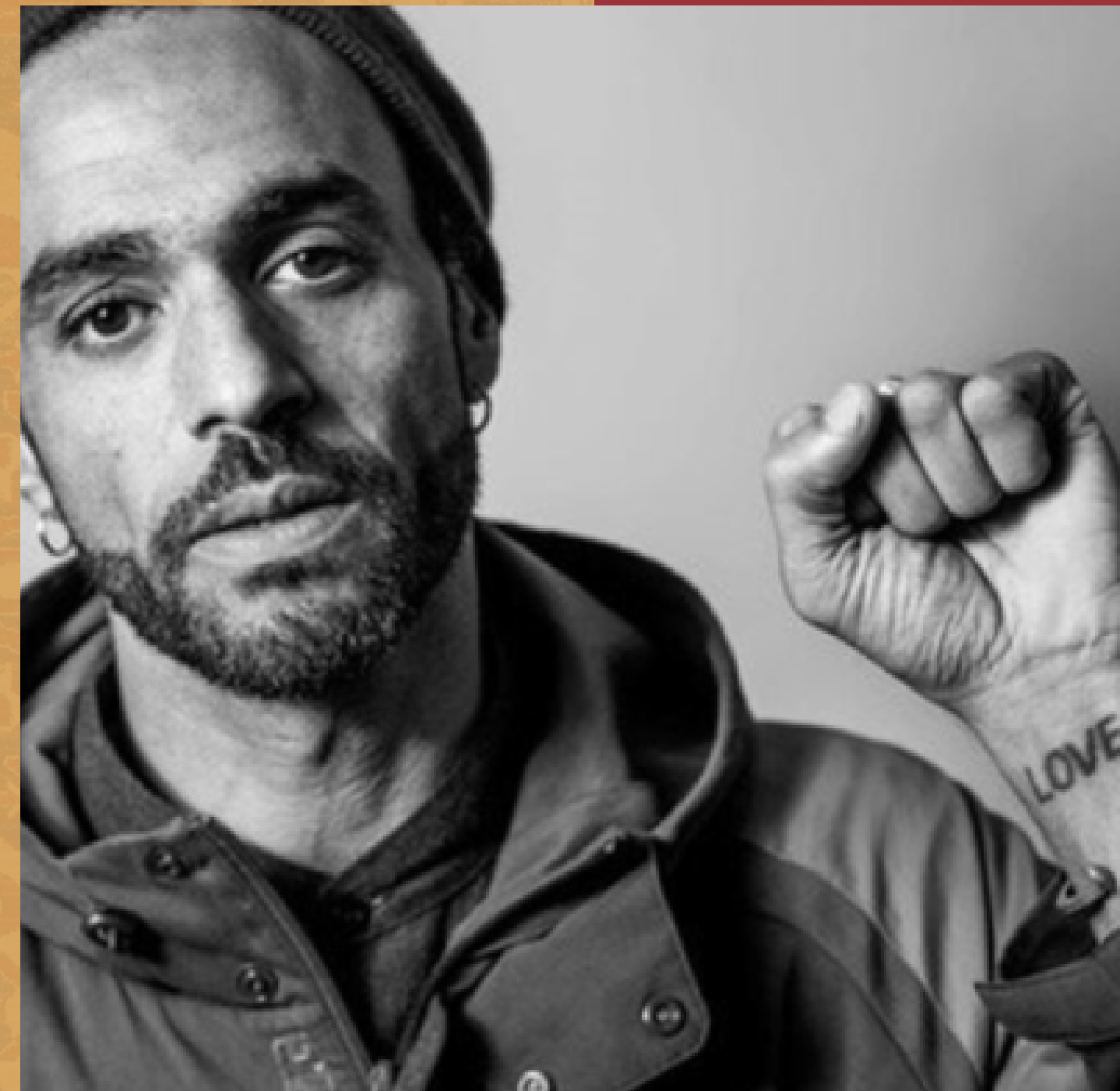
Director/ Producer / Writer

Sol Guy

Sol believes we change and shape our world through the stories we tell. His passion to explore art and social change has provided him with a unique creative journey. From his early days as a founding member of the groundbreaking Canadian Hip Hop group Rascalz to creating, and presenting TV shows, producing and directing films, writing books, and managing other artists, he has all the while been implementing innovative socially-minded business practices.

His body of work and credits include: host, producer and co-creator of the groundbreaking MTV/Nat Geo TV series 4REAL; Co-producer of the anthem of the 2010 World Cup— K’naan’s - WAVIN FLAG, #1 in 18 countries; Producer for the HBO feature-length documentary Inside Out about award winning street artist JR; Author of the award-winning children’s book When I Get Older; and Co-producer of the short film ELLIS starring Robert De Niro. Sol was the Creative Director for Tribeca Enterprises, overseeing creative for the festival, Tribeca productions and the Tribeca Film Institute (TFI). Recent films by Sol include The Death of my Two Fathers, You Resemble Me, Am I a Man and Serendipity.

Sol has won multiple Juno awards working with Rascalz, Kardinal Offishall, k-os and K’naan, been named an Innovator of Change by the JWT agency and has been honored by National Geographic as an “Emerging Explorer”. He continues to produce across multiple creative disciplines while seeking and supporting alternative models of creative practice that prioritize the artist, people and the planet’s well- being.



Executive Producer

Baktash Ahadi

Baktash Ahadi is an Emmy Award winning filmmaker, human rights activist, and TEDx Speaker. He directs, produces, and writes films that explore the human condition and is particularly drawn to stories of forced migration, conflict, refugees, and vulnerable and underrepresented communities.

The recipient of numerous awards for public service and documentary storytelling, Baktash has worked on race relations in communities across the United States and on the peace process in Afghanistan. His work has been featured in The New York Times, Washington Post, National Public Radio (NPR), Business Insider, The BBC, TIME Magazine, and The Atlantic.

Baktash is currently at work directing a film about combat veterans, mental health, and equine therapy. He also supports other filmmakers from concept to impact campaign as an executive producer and impact producer.



Executive Producer / Producer

Hila Hamidi

Born and raised in Southern California, Hila Hamidi is a television writer and producer at Warner Bros. and runs a digital marketing agency based out of Orange County. Her passion for storytelling flourished at eleven when she visited Afghanistan for the first time.

Dropping out of high school at sixteen to pursue a career in architecture, Hila quickly became her family's disappointment by graduating from the University of Southern California with a degree in business and screenwriting.

Shortly after, she redeemed herself by working with National Geographic, Warner Bros. Stage 13, Break the Room, and a Chuck Lorre sitcom with Warner Bros. over at CBS and now FOX. She also runs her blog called Hilastan, where she shares her travels and explores her hyphenated identity, working on bridging the gap between the east and west.



Producer

Official Poster

ON THE
MOUNTAIN

A FILM BY ANYA RAZA

Contact

Website

www.onthemountainfilm.com

IMDB

[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt29620826/?
ref=ext shr lnk](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt29620826/?ref=ext_shr_lnk)

Instagram

www.instagram.com/onthemountainfilm

Email

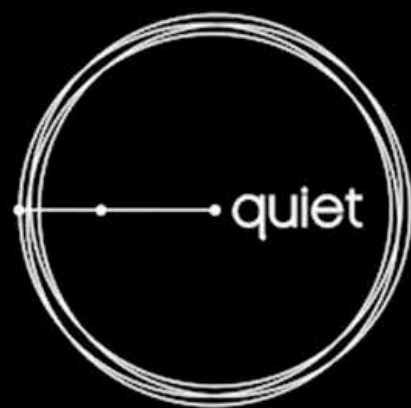
anya.arcmedia@gmail.com



Producing Partners



ARC



PICTURE
M&TION

CHAIYO

TALEEM
PROJECT

SHOT
ON RED



Thank you!