

CONTACT

Tanya Leverault, ITVS
Adrianna Paidas

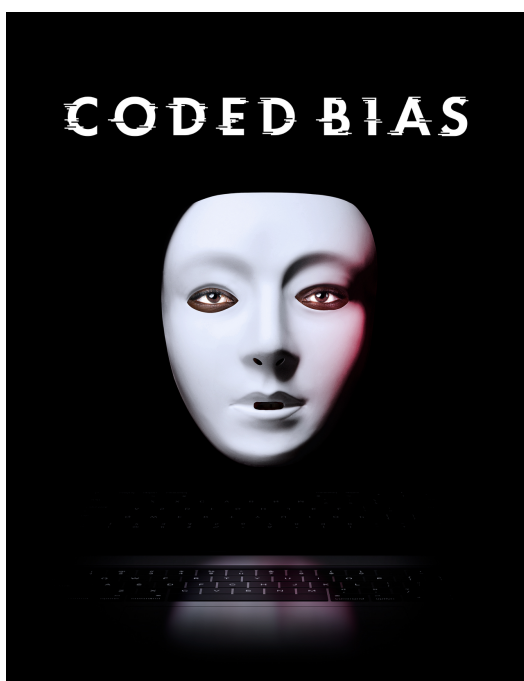
415-356-8383
646-762-8704

tanya.leverault@itvs.org
adrianna.paidas@beckmedia.com

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CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED *CODED BIAS* TO PREMIERE ON PBS AND THE PBS VIDEO APP ON MARCH 22, 2021

*Documentary Explores Racial Prejudices That Exist In Facial Recognition
Algorithms, and the Threat Artificial Intelligence Poses to Civil Liberties*



(San Francisco, CA), January 21, 2021 – In an increasingly data-driven, automated world, the question of how to protect individuals' civil liberties in the face of artificial intelligence looms larger by the day. Directed by award-winning filmmaker Shalini Kantayya, ***Coded Bias*** follows MIT Media Lab researcher Joy Buolamwini, along with data scientists, mathematicians and watchdog groups from different parts of the world, as they fight to expose the discrimination within the facial recognition algorithms now prevalent across all spheres of daily life.

Praised as “cleareyed” by *The New York Times* and “a chilling plunge into Orwellian reality” by *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Coded Bias* will make its broadcast premiere on PBS's *Independent Lens* on March 22, 2021 at 10:00 p.m. ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS and will also be available to stream on the PBS Video app.

While conducting research on facial recognition technology at the MIT Media Lab, computer scientist Joy Buolamwini made the startling discovery that the algorithm could not detect dark-skinned faces or women with accuracy. This led to the harrowing realization that the very machine learning algorithms intended to avoid prejudice are only as unbiased as the humans and historical data programming them.

Coded Bias documents the dramatic journey that follows, from discovery to exposure to activism, as Buolamwini goes public with her findings and undertakes an effort to create a movement toward accountability and transparency, even testifying before Congress to push for the first-ever legislation governing facial recognition in the United States.

Around the world, artificial intelligence has already permeated every facet of public and private life—automating decisions about who gets hired, who gets health insurance and how long a prison term should be—theoretically casting analyses and insights that are free from human

prejudice. In addition to following Buolamwini's journey, Kantayya also goes to London, where police are piloting the use of facial recognition technology; Houston, Texas, where teachers are evaluated via algorithms; and Hangzhou, China, which is quickly becoming a model for city-wide surveillance. And in each of these places, she profiles data scientists, mathematicians, ethicists, and everyday individuals impacted by these disruptive technologies who are fighting to shed light on the impact of bias in A.I. on civil rights and democracy, and to call for greater accountability.

"*Coded Bias* illustrates the profound ways in which algorithms have come to shape people's lives, with very little oversight from public and elected officials," said Kantayya. "It's my hope that the film pushes audiences toward a greater awareness about how these disruptive technologies impact issues of equality and equity and that it in turn encourages more people to speak up and hold the companies behind them accountable."

Coded Bias made its premiere at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, was an official selection at SXSW, and received a nomination for a Critics' Choice Award.

Visit the [Coded Bias](#) page on *Independent Lens* for more information about the film.

About the Filmmaker

Shalini Kantayya

Director Shalini Kantayya's critically acclaimed feature documentary *Coded Bias* premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, was nominated for a Critics' Choice Award for Best Science Documentary and will broadcast on *Independent Lens* in March. Kantayya directed the season finale episode for the National Geographic television series *Breakthrough*, a series profiling trailblazing scientists transforming the future, Executive Produced by Ron Howard, broadcast globally in June 2017. Her debut feature film *Catching the Sun*, about the race for a clean energy future, premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival and was named a New York Times Critics' Pick. *Catching the Sun* released globally on Netflix on Earth Day 2016 with Executive Producer Leonardo DiCaprio, and was nominated for the Environmental Media Association Award for Best Documentary.

CREDITS

Director	Shalini Kantayya
Producer	Shalini Kantayya
Co-Producer	Sabine Hoffman
Editors	Alexandra Gilwit Zachary Ludescher
Executive Producer	Shalini Kantayya Lois Vossen



ABOUT *INDEPENDENT LENS*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: facebook.com/independentlens and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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1435 Folsom Street
San Francisco CA 94103
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
pbs.org/independentlens