



# Troll Storm

When courage defies the storm, justice prevails.



A DELPHIN FILMS PRODUCTION. DIRECTED BY EUNICE LAU. EDITED BY YASU INOUE. CINEMATOGRAPHY BY HIROO TAKAKA. PRODUCED BY EUNICE LAU, BROOKE SWANEY, ZACHARY KERSCHBERG.  
MUSIC BY AMAN KHOSLA, ANTOINE KATZ. RE-RECORDING MIXER MATT ROOKER. CO-DIRECTOR MIKI INAGAWA. ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS SHEILA HAVA, ASSISTANT PRODUCERS KATRINE ATHERTON.



**Directed by Eunice Lau**

# ABOUT THE FILM

## PRESS CONTACTS

[info@delphifilm.com](mailto:info@delphifilm.com) | (+1) 917.284.7882  
<https://www.delphinfilm.com/our-work/trollstorm>



## WORLD PREMIERE:

**Big Sky Documentary Film Festival 2024**

TRAILER: <https://vimeo.com/797745876>

**COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION & DURATION:** USA, 83 min

## LOGLINE

A successful realtor and soccer mom's life is turned upside down when neo-Nazis unleash a troll storm against her and her family. In the face of an alarming growth of American fascism, she finds solidarity with her community by standing up, fighting back and ultimately filing a landmark case for the First Amendment, setting a precedent that could shape America's future.

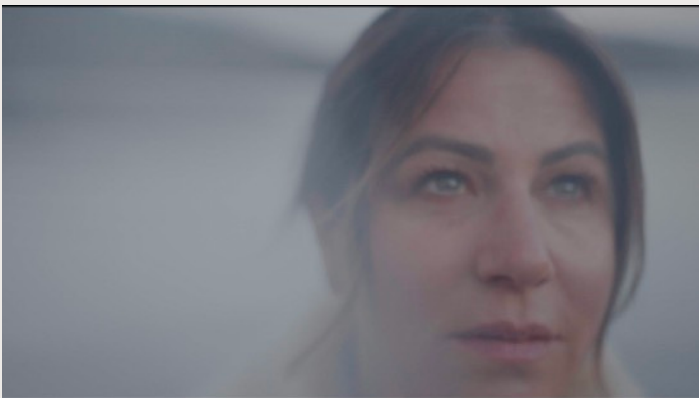
## SYNOPSIS

Set in the heart of Whitefish, Montana, a seemingly idyllic ski town, antisemitic attacks against Tanya Gersh start soon after Donald Trump wins the presidential election. As the storm of online harassment intensifies, the Whitefish community is forced to confront the alarming local rise of far-right extremism. Tanya, overwhelmed by being the focal point of the attacks and at the threat of eminent danger, courageously takes a stand against hate, fear, and prejudice by filing a lawsuit against her perpetrators.

As Tanya attempts to understand and process what's happening to her family, she finds in Holocaust survivor Stephen Jacobs' story an uncanny parallel between the rise of white nationalism in the United States and the rise of fascism in Germany. Stephen's historical perspective gives added significance to her fight and exposes Donald Trump's promise to "Make America Great Again" as a thinly-veiled battle cry to return to a time when white supremacy thrived. Directed by Eunice Lau and produced by Brooke Swaney and Zachary Kerschberg, TROLL STORM chronicles the harrowing journey of a woman who transforms from a victim of cyber-hate into a courageous advocate for justice and free speech. The documentary captures the spirit of resilience, the power of community, and the pursuit of justice in the face of adversity. By telling her story, Tanya renders visible the architecture of oppression that holds us down. More than ever, this film captures the zeitgeist of our present turmoil.

The production of TROLL STORM has been made possible through the generous support of the Montana Film Office and the Claims Conference. Their contributions have enabled the filmmakers to bring this important and timely story to audiences around the world.

## FILM CHARACTERS



### **TANYA GERSH**

Her ancestors fled Russia during the pogroms and her Brooklyn-born parents were part of the anti-war and civil rights movement, but she is a self-described apolitical soccer mom who becomes the target of an antisemitic campaign after she agrees to help the mother of notorious alt-right leader Richard Spencer. When the Spencers turn on her, accusing her of extortion, it prompts a neo-Nazi website to launch a “troll storm”. Overnight, she receives an avalanche of death threats. Despite the trauma, she decided to fight back and files a lawsuit against her detractors.



### **STEPHEN JACOBS**

Born in Poland, Stephen was only five when he and his family were sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp. After surviving the Holocaust, they immigrated to the U.S. in 1948. He went on to become a renowned architect in New York, modernizing the city's landscape with his signature modular designs. In 2002, he returned to Germany to create a memorial at Buchenwald's former site, and before his death, he also designed a memorial in Tirana to commemorate the Albanians who saved Jews during World War II.



### **DAVID DINIELLI**

As the head of the Southern Poverty Law Center's anti-hate and extremism litigation division, David was the lead counsel representing Tanya in the lawsuit against the neo-Nazi website, Daily Stormer, and its founder Andrew Anglin. He created the legal strategy that led to victory in a landmark judgement that ruled the First Amendment does not protect hate crimes or online terror campaigns. David also provided Tanya much emotional support during the arduous two-year legal battle. He is now teaching at Yale Law School.

# ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS



## **EUNICE LAU | DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/WRITER**

A former journalist, Eunice's works have appeared on Discovery Channel, Al Jazeera English and Channel News Asia, and she is also supported by eminent arts and media organizations such as the Jerome Foundation, Tribeca Film Institute, ITVS, Chicken & Egg Pictures, Women Make Movies, Points North Institute, YouTube Impact Lab and IFP. Her debut documentary ACCEPT THE CALL, set in Minnesota's Somali community, explores the impact of injustice and intergenerational trauma. It premiered on PBS Independent Lens in 2020. Her second film A-TOWN BOYZ, which is streaming on Amazon, captures the immigrant struggle of the Asian community in Atlanta. She holds an MFA in Film from New York University.



## **BROOKE SWANEY | PRODUCER**

Brooke (enrolled Blackfeet and Salish descendant) works to tell Indigenous stories and stories from other marginalized communities. DAUGHTER OF A LOST BIRD (PBS/America Reframed) is her first feature documentary. Most recently she made a short film about rising star and Blackfeet actress Lily Gladstone (Firelight Media/American Masters). She also produced BELLA VISTA (Rotterdam), and SIXTY FOUR FLOOD (PBS & PBS Digital). She has been a fellow through PBS Wyncote, a NATIVE Fellow at the European Film Market/Berlinale, Woodstock/WhiteFeather Arts, the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, and Sundance/Time Warner. She holds an MFA in Film from NYU.

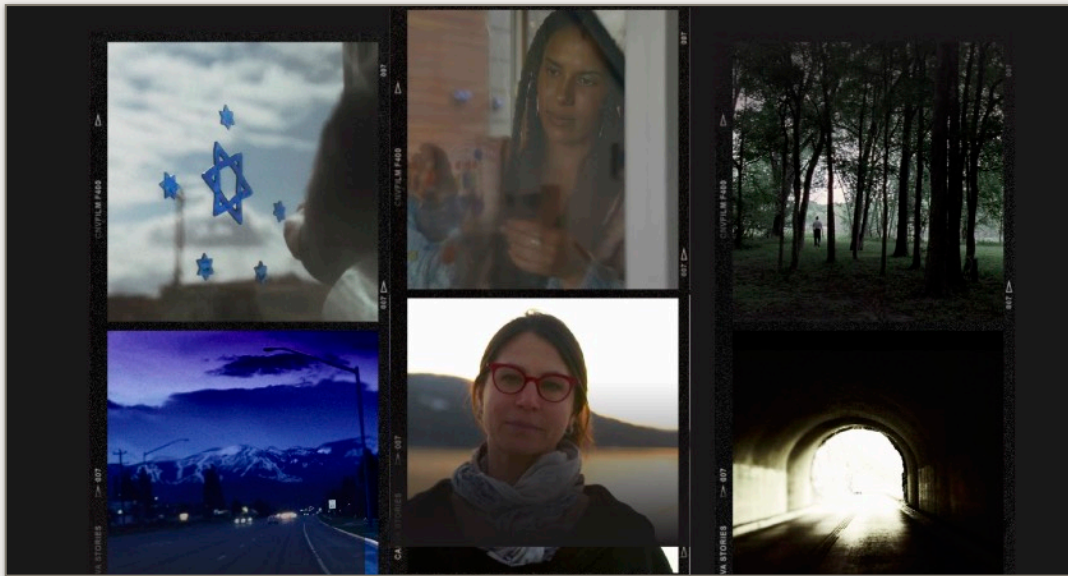


## **ZACHARY KERSCHBERG | PRODUCER**

As the grandson of immigrants that escaped the Holocaust in 1939, Zachary is deeply committed to telling this meaningful and important cautionary tale to the American people. A narrative and documentary filmmaker based in New York, Zachary's films have screened at Cannes, SXSW, and the NYFF and have been distributed nationally and internationally on PBS, Cable Networks, and streaming platforms. He is a recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship and a National Board of Review Student Grant, as well as an alum of the Berlinale Talent Campus and SF Filmhouse. Zachary holds an honors B.A. from UC Berkeley and M.F.A.'s in Dramatic Writing and Film Production from NYU.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This story came to me after my documentary ACCEPT THE CALL premiered on PBS Independent Lens and soon after, a viewer emailed me that I should look into the story of Tanya Gersh. It was not initially clear to me why he believed that my film, centered on a Muslim family impacted by Islamophobia in Minnesota, was connected to a Jewish family impacted by antisemitism in Montana. As I dug into the research, however, a glaring truth came to light: antisemitism and Islamophobia are not only entangled, but deeply rooted in the same systems of white supremacy and Christian hegemony.



Both Tanya Gersh and Zacharia Abdurahman had fallen victim to the system of white nationalism. While anti-Muslim bias and bigotry were unleashed and fueled by George Bush's "War on Terror", it was the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Donald Trump that emboldened a surge in hate speech and hate crimes, and again normalized antisemitism in mainstream America.

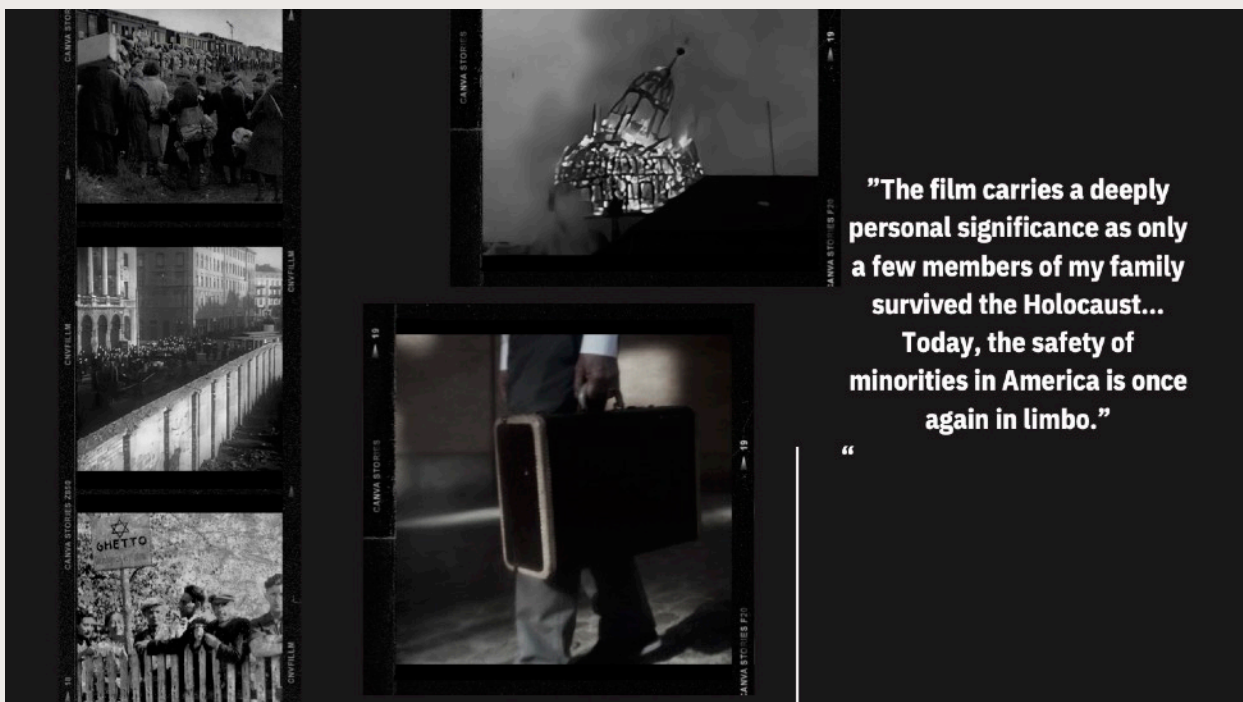
By bringing the historical narrative of Holocaust survivor Stephen Jacobs into Tanya's story, we hope to place her story within the context of a larger canvas. History is not simply the study of the past, but also an explanation of the present, and can serve as a forecast to trending events. The parallels between 1930s Germany and present-day America are alarmingly similar and equally terrifying.

The team behind TROLL STORM is mostly BIPOC filmmakers. Collectively, we have inherited a long history of oppression and discrimination, as well as stories of resistance. As artists, our tools to forge change is storytelling. Such as the story of this courageous mother who fought back against the all-powerful white supremacists and provided a new narrative that makes her victory a rallying cry for a united movement against hate. These stories transcend class, race and ethnicity, and inspire us to recognize our common interest in the collective liberation for all people, and in the struggle to end white supremacy - and all related systems of oppression.

## PRODUCER'S STATEMENT: ZACHARY KERSCHBERG

TROLL STORM is an extremely important and timely cautionary tale about unchecked hatred. At the same time, the film carries a deeply personal significance as only a few members of my family survived the Holocaust: my grandparents were fortunate to escape to Argentina in 1939 and ten years later immigrated to Cleveland, Ohio, a place they felt safe and where they were able to rebuild their lives.

Today, the safety of minorities in America is once again in limbo. With a historic high of over 2,000 attacks on Jewish Americans in 2019, the film not only examines the plight of this group but also delves into the complex dynamics surrounding the fundamental concept of free speech.



We firmly believe that TROLL STORM's landmark precedent will be remembered as a pivotal moment in protecting the rights of all minorities, including Jews, Muslims, Asians, LGBTQ+ individuals, indigenous peoples, and others, leaving an indelible mark for generations to come.

With the presence of high-profile and controversial figures like Richard Spencer and Andrew Anglin, the documentary presents a modern-day rendition of the classic David and Goliath narrative, with Tanya Gersh emerging as the unlikely hero, triumphing against all odds. It is a testament to the power of one woman's strength and determination.

By addressing current political issues and trends, TROLL STORM contributes to the dialogue about our common future while encouraging viewers to embrace new perspectives and actively work towards conflict resolution.

# PRODUCER'S STATEMENT: BROOKE SWANEY

As a woman with both Indigenous and settler ancestors from the lands of what is now called Montana, I keep tabs on instances of hate in my homelands, and the United States at large. The alarming, and seemingly growing, instances of hate speech and crimes that have come to light (or rather come out in the open) in the past few years troubles me.



And so when I became reacquainted with Eunice Lau and her drive to share Tanya Gersh's story, I was inspired to help. Tanya's story is really what fascinates me. She's a perfect example of the American dream, and yet, as a Jewish woman, sadly, she is not safe from hate -- nor is her family. And despite the fear and threats she endured, Tanya does not back down and fights for her Whitefish community, her Jewish community, her family, and for others. She truly is inspiring in her journey from soccer mom victim to nationally empowered advocate.

# CREDITS

## Director

Eunice Lau

## Producers

Brooke Swaney  
Eunice Lau  
Zachary Kerschberg

## Film Editor

Yasu Inoue

## Cinematographer

Hiroo Takaoka

## Camera Assistant

Kier Atherton

## Sound Recordist

Naoki Sakurai

## Associate Producer

Sheila Haya

## Writers

Yasu Inoue & Eunice Lau

## Supervising Sound & Re-recording Mixer

Matt Rocker

## Original Music Composers

Antoine Katz  
Aman Khosla

## Digital Intermediate Colorist

Miki Inagawa

## HD Post Services, DI & DCP provided by Assist-Corp

## Sound Mix Facility

Underground Audio

## Title Design

Red Circle, Inc

## Key Art Design

Chris Davidson

## Fiscal Sponsor

Women Make Movies

## This film was supported by grants from

Claims Conference  
Montana Film Office

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