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## Short Film Produced by Native Virgin Islander Wins Best Documentary at Chicago Indie Film Awards, Will Air on PBS Next Year

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**Angela Golden Bryan** By. ANGELA GOLDEN BRYAN

Fireburn the Documentary, a powerful short film on the human rights violations that occurred during the Fireburn — the bloody Labor Revolt of 1878, on the Island of St. Croix — will make its global debut at various film festivals this year and was just awarded Best Documentary Short at the Chicago Indie Film Awards.

The award for the Angela Golden Bryan-produced documentary follows Ms. Bryan's Amazon #1 Bestseller book Fireburn the Screenplay, which was published in 2018 and will air on PBS in 2022.

According to the release, *Fireburn* is the forgotten story that centers around the event known as the Fireburn, which took place post-emancipation. The documentary looks at the inhumane treatment of the freed laborers, female empowerment, colonialism and the consequences of suppressing a person's basic human rights. Filmed on the island of St. Croix, *Fireburn* is designed as a tool for cultural preservation and education.

Storytellers, historians and artists share their knowledge of the event in order for audiences to gain a holistic view of the Fireburn. The documentary helps bring the story to a global stage and new audiences. The story was immortalized on March 31, 2018 in a sculpture in Copenhagen, and made world news headlines - as the first public monument of a black woman. The monumental, award-winning public sculpture, "I am Queen Mary" of the rebel queen who led the revolt, has been immortalized into a Danish history book's cover by Forlaget Columbus.

The documentary has been selected to be screened in three major film festivals to date, including International & Black Diversity Film Festival (IBDFF), Chicago Indie Film Awards and New Haven International Film Festival. Ms. Bryan and her team have been selected for Best Short Documentary by a Black Filmmaker and Best Short Documentary in the International Film Category at the IBDFF. The IBDFF is a Toronto-based independent film festival established to give a platform to Black Filmmakers while celebrating cultural diversity through inclusion.

*Fireburn* has also been selected in two categories at the New Haven International Film Festival - Best Documentary Short and Black Lives Matter, African American History & Social Justice. The New Haven International Film Festival is Connecticut Film Festival's culminating event showcasing a cadre of handpicked films in half a dozen venues throughout the state. Chicago Indie Film Awards is an IMDb qualifying monthly and annual festival, which celebrates and recognizes Independent indie filmmakers from all over the world. It celebrates its fifth year this year.

According to the release, to produce the screenplay, the award-winning author and actress Angela Golden Bryan, who grew up on the St. Croix, brought together a team of acclaimed experts in the film industry. The screenplay was directed by the award-winning director and cinematographer Joel Fendelman, who has written, produced and directed many narrative and documentary films, such as "Man on Fire" (which received an IDA Award). Actor, Marjorie Tingle, a Meisner trained actress and producer of numerous independent films, and producer, Steven James Tingus, one of the nation's leading experts, advocates, and thought leaders for disability, aging, and health, and human services policy, and programs rounds out the team. *Fireburn* addresses the heart of humanity, very much in line with director Joel Fendelman's aspiration to embrace socially conscious stories.

"Having grown up on the island of St. Croix, in the US Virgin Islands, hearing stories about Queen Mary and the Fireburn, I always knew that to be a part of our island's history. Later in life, the event took on a new meaning for me when I learned that Fireburn was also a part of my family history; my great-great-great-grandmother, Moriah, was a teenager and took care of her younger brother and sister while her parents fought in the Fireburn," said Ms. Bryan. "The story of the Fireburn is a tale of our humanity and is still relevant today. It is my hope that this documentary will serve as a tool to understand the people and culture of the Virgin Islands while educating those unfamiliar with our history."

Ms. Bryan's nonprofit, the Fireburn Foundation, Inc., received a major grant to assist with producing the documentary, the release stated. In a statement from the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands, from whom the grant was given, Vice President and Director of Grants and

Programs, Anna Wheatley Scarbriel stated, “Our goal is to bolster local humanities entities, as well as to enrich the lives of people throughout the territory through humanities, education, lifelong learning, and public humanities programming.”

Ms. Bryan added, “My team and I are grateful for the grant, as well as all the support from our generous donors. We could not have taken this project from an idea to the screen without their help. Now we are able to share a pivotal event in the history of the US Virgin Islands with a new generation of islanders, as well as many others beyond the Territories. We are thrilled that it is being seen all over the world and look forward to bringing it back to the Virgin Islands as an award-winning documentary.”

To learn more about the author and Fireburn go [here](#).

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