

HURDLE - DOCUMENTARY FEATURE - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Logline: In the shadow of a wall stands a new generation of Palestinian. With defiant creativity, they prove that no matter the height of the obstacle, one can always climb.

Hurdle is the documentary feature film set in an environment where systems of power have embraced and encouraged division. Following the construction of the Israeli Separation Wall, *Hurdle* is the story of Palestinian youth who are using creativity as a form of non-violent resistance to the limitations placed upon them. As the Israeli military occupation reaches its 50th year, the next generation of Palestinian is striving to rewrite their future in the pursuit of freedom and self-determination for themselves and for those that follow. In a land where walls and checkpoints were built to contain and control, *Hurdle's* characters lack the basic freedom of movement and are approaching this as an obstacle to overcome through unexpected means. Utilizing the sport of parkour and the documentation of daily life, the film reveals two narratives from individuals separated by a wall, but united in this pursuit. Ultimately, *Hurdle* delivers an untold story of the depths and challenges of what it means to be a young person striving for freedom in the modern era.

Sami, a 24-year-old Palestinian and the founder and coach of the Jerusalem Parkour team, taught himself parkour by watching videos on Youtube. He is a rock to his peers, takes his role as a mentor seriously and remains steadfastly devoted to his sport and community. Living his entire life in the Old City of Jerusalem, everyday Sami must pass Israeli military checkpoints in order to visit his family or to pray at Al Aqsa mosque—Islam's third holiest site. As a form of collective punishment for Palestinian dissent, he is often denied access to move from place to place. And yet, Sami finds strength and focus through his passion for parkour. He is unwavering as he teaches youth ages eight to twenty-one to find their freedom by reinventing the walls built to contain them into a launchpad towards personal freedom.

Living on the other side of the wall in the Palestinian West Bank, Mohammad, a lifetime resident of Aida refugee camp, paints a grim picture of Palestinian life under occupation. He, too, turns to creativity in order to overcome the walls surrounding him. Using his camera to document daily life in the camp, Mohammad looks at any Palestinian creativity as a form of resistance to the occupation. Constantly documenting and uploading, Mohammad shares vivid stories about daily military incursions and the struggles of living in the camp. With the power of his camera and the internet, his voice is able to reach the world beyond the walls built to keep him stationary. Despite being shot in the face with a rubber bullet while photographing, Mohammad teaches the youth of the camp his trade and continues to share stories of loss and hope in an effort to find freedom.

Hurdle is a visceral experience. Combining a cinema verite style with personal accounts, the viewer feels as if they have been dropped into the environment of the subjects. The film avoids talking heads to explain policy, but instead reveals the realities of the subjects' lives through engaging scenes and intimate accounts. The film uses juxtaposition—from the beautiful sights and sounds of a 4,000 year old holy city to the cacophony of violence and unrest—to place the viewer into a state of vulnerability similar to that felt by the subjects.

In *Hurdle's* first act, the viewer is dropped onto the precipice of the 50th anniversary of the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territories. This act introduces the viewer to the palpable tensions caused by the conflict and its restrictions on the character's movement. They are shown surrounded by walls and impediments to their freedom of movement, but responding to these restrictions through the sport of parkour and creative video documentation.

In the second act, the tensions felt by our subjects reach a boiling point. From protests and clashes to one of the parkour players being shot by an Israeli sniper, the audience sees the character's unpredictable and harsh reality first-hand. With the 50th anniversary of the occupation occurring during this portion of the film, the narrative sheds light on the effects on the psyche the environment has on the characters as they must face their own vulnerability and pain.

In the final act, the characters find a large societal victory through non-violent creativity. With new hope they look to hand the creative practices in which they have found freedom down to the next generation. As the film concludes, President Donald Trump's visit to Israel is highlighted, tying the narrative and viewer into the broader global conversation: will we build more walls or tear them down?

Before starting *Hurdle*, I (Director Michael Rowley) spent two years working as a contracted filmmaker for an Israeli / Palestinian conflict-resolution NGO based in Washington, DC / Jerusalem. One of the most striking things to me are the walls that weave through the landscape, painting a physical and metaphorical picture of the pain caused by this conflict. They separate people from their families, from their land, from their holy sites and in many ways from their dignity. So, when I heard of young Palestinians who were addressing these barriers with defiance and creativity, I knew this was a story that needed to be championed. Throughout production the characters excitedly invited me into the inner-circles of their lives - giving me intimate access to characters that are often misrepresented or undocumented.

The world has reached a significant moment in human history. With the new levels of globalization and connectivity, there has come a significant shift in philosophy embraced by younger generations. Feeling the pressures of this shift, old systems of power are doubling their efforts to maintain control and to bring back "the way things were." Using tactics steeped in nationalism, racism and creating divides in order to consolidate power, some are feeling that basic freedoms are at stake or already missing. When systems of power are building walls, both physically and metaphorically, how will this new generation respond?

PRODUCTION PLAN

Hurdle kicked off its distribution phase with our World Premiere at the Dallas International Film Festival in April 2019. We completed post in January 2019 following principal photography shot throughout 2017. We plan to continue our festival run through 2019.

AUDIENCE AND DISTRIBUTION PLAN

We have worked tirelessly at building connections in an effort to increase *Hurdle's* audience and prospects for distribution. Keisha Salmon, the director of marketing at POV and Nikki Heyman, outreach and education coordinator of POV have both indicated strong interest in *Hurdle* as a good candidate for their 2020 season across multiple in-person meetings.

By the end of June 2019, we hope to finalize our relationship with a sales agent for international and streaming rights. We have been honored to have wonderful people like Abigail Disney and Molly O'Brien of Fork Films and Michelle Knudsen of MXN Entertainment introduce us to some incredible sales agents and potential distribution relationships. Additionally, through our involvement in Hot Docs Doc Shop and Sheffield Doc Fest Doc Player, we have been provided with "decision maker guides" with a large number of contacts. We are pursuing these relationships to help us find distribution worldwide. We want to have a sales agent on board before the second

half of our festival run (where - based on preliminary feedback - we expect to be programmed in at least one of the larger festivals in the Northeast.)

Hurdle's audience to be made up of two primary segments: politically moderate and left-leaning North Americans and Europeans and Israelis and Palestinians (including the global diaspora). We plan to reach the majority of our North American audience through VOD, but are also connecting through the traditional festival circuit and screenings on university campuses in coordination with Just Vision. We have also been invited to screen the film for a large audience of US congressional leaders and global peacemakers at Telos' annual conference. We are incredibly excited to reach our underserved Palestinian audience through a run of community screenings we are planning in Israel / Palestine in early-to-mid-2020.

FUNDRAISING STRATEGY AND GRANT USAGE

Hurdle was a proud recipient of Austin Film Society's North Texas Pioneer Grant in 2018. Along with AFS's generous support, we have largely funded the film ourselves and through online crowdfunding from our community of supporters. This has been enough to cover all of our costs through post-production, but we are in need of further financial support to make sure *Hurdle's* inspiring story is seen by as many of our target audience as possible.

In order to close our funding gap, we are currently running a final crowdfunding campaign on Launchgood, the leading crowdfunding platform for Muslim projects, and are seeing some success there. We are also going back to a few of our larger donors and offering private screenings in exchange for additional support - these conversations are ongoing, but they are looking promising. Additionally, we have had dozens of people contact us about potentially coordinating community screenings. Although we want to keep screening fees at a reasonable rate to make sure *Hurdle's* message reaches as many people as possible, we believe there is an opportunity to generate a return on these opportunities in the coming months that will allow us to reach a break even point on the film.

We have been able to bring in \$██████ in cash and in-kind over the course of the project, and are sitting only \$28,000 short of our total budget — the amount needed to make final payments to our contractors and to reach our impact and distribution goals.

We are humbly requesting a total of \$██████ from Austin Film Society for distribution support. \$██████ will cover a portion of our festival entry fees, \$██████ for editing costs to produce a 1-hour broadcast edit requested by PBS' POV for potential inclusion in their 2020 season, and \$██████ for publicist Brian Geldin's services in the second half of our 2019 festival run.

Funding for these three items would make a huge impact on our ability to get *Hurdle* in front of potential buyers and help us take the next important step on our most promising current relationship with PBS. We have been so honored and humbled by the support of our Texas film community. We can't thank you enough for what you have already done to help us bring the dream of *Hurdle* into reality. And we greatly appreciate your consideration for this additional funding to help us cross the finish line.

A. PRE-PRODUCTION/ADMINISTRATIVE				"=" TOTAL COST	"=" (CASH "+ IN-KIND)
(UNIT X	RATE	DAYS/WKS			
Director	1	day	10 days	\$ 1,000	\$ -
Producer	1	day	10 days	\$ 10,000	\$ -
Phone/Fax	8	week	weeks	\$ 200	\$
Mail/Shipping				\$ 200	\$
Copyright Registration			Flat Fee	\$ 20	\$
Legal	1		Flat Fee - Retainer	\$ 10,000	\$
Accounting			Software Fee	\$ 500	\$
Errors and Omissions Insurance	1			\$ 4,300	\$
Title Clearance Report	1			\$ 300	\$
Travel/Lodging	1	Mo	Month	\$ 850	\$
Fundraising Sample	1			\$ 1,600	\$ 1,600
Other (List)					
	1		Security Protocols	\$ 500	\$

Total Preproduction/Administrative Costs

\$ 29,470 \$ 12,970 \$ 16,500

B. PRODUCTION

	(UNIT	X	RATE	DAYS/WKS	= " TOTAL COST	"=" (CASH "+ " IN-KIND)
Cast					\$ -	\$ -
Director	1		Flat Fee		\$ 10,000	\$
Director of Photography	100	day	Days		\$ 7,000	\$
Sound Recordist	100	day	Days		\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000
Production Assistant	10	day	Days		\$ 500	\$ 500
Other Crew (list)						
Translator	1		Flat Fee		\$ 350	\$ 350
Fixer	11	day	Days		\$ 550	\$ 550
Camera Package	1				\$ 3,596	\$ 3,596
Lighting & Grip Package	1				\$ 1,075	\$ 1,075
Sound package	1				\$ 650	\$ 650
Still photography					\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Grocery	105	day	Days		\$ 4,200	\$ 4,200
Airfare					\$ 3,680	\$ 3,680
Housing	120	Airbnb	Days		\$ 3,850	\$ 3,850
Ground Transportation					\$ 455	\$ 455
Production Insurance	2	year	Years		\$ 1,200	\$ 1,200
Shipping					\$ 150	\$ 150

Total Production

\$ 41,256 \$ 28,256 \$ 13,000

C. POST-PRODUCTION

	(UNIT	X	RATE	DAYS/WKS	"="	TOTAL COST	"="	(CASH	"+"	IN-KIND)
Editor				Reduced Rate	\$	10,000	\$	████	\$	████
Broadcast Edit (for 1 hour cut)				Reduced Rate	\$	2,000	\$	████	\$	████
Sound Editor/Mix]	50	300		Hour	\$	10,000	\$	████	\$	████
Disc Stock					\$	145	\$	████		
Edit Facilities	12	175		Month	\$	2,100	\$		\$	████
Hard Drives					\$	350	\$	████		
Translation/Transcription	50	20/hour		Hours	\$	1,000	\$	500	\$	500
Subtitling				Flat Rate	\$	2,000	\$	2,000		
Closed Captioning				Flat Rate	\$	1,000	\$	1,000		
Original Music Composition					\$	1,000			\$	1,000
Licensed Music					\$	4,900	\$	4,900		
Visual Effects					\$	4,500	\$	1,500	\$	3,000
Titles				████	\$	1,500	\$	500	\$	1,000
Color Correction				Flat Fee	████	3,200	\$	3,200		
Shipping					\$	100	\$	100		

Total Post-production costs

\$ 43,795	\$ 25,195	\$ 18,600
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		"=" TOTAL COST		"=" (CASH "+" IN-KIND)	
D. Distribution					
Middle East Screenings	Travel, Venue Costs etc. (seeking sponsorsh	\$ 12,000	\$		
DVD Authoring/Duplication		\$ 1,500	\$		
DCP		\$ 1,250	\$		
Tape Stock/DVDs	DVD/Bluray/Case	\$ 500	\$		
Press kit	Design + Printing	\$ 1,000	\$		
Postcards/Shirts/Stickers	Design + Printing	\$ 3,300	\$		
Poster Printing		\$ 500	\$		
Festival entry fees		\$ 4,500	\$		
Airfare		\$ 4,000	\$		
Accomodations		\$ 1,000	\$		
Car rental/Taxi		\$ 500	\$		
Publicist		\$ 5,000	\$	5,000	
Events		\$ 2,000	\$	1,000	1,000
Digital Marketing		\$ 8,000	\$	8,000	
Website	24 20/month Month	\$ 480	\$	480	

Total Distribution

\$ 45,530	\$ 43,630	\$ 1,900
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Cash Total All Sections	<u>\$ 110,051</u>
"+" Contingency (5%)	\$ 5,503
"+" Fiscal Sponsor/Processing Fees (7%)	\$ 2,696
	<i>estimated 35% of total budget raised through fiscal sponsor</i>
"+" In-Kind All Sections	<u>\$ 50,000</u>
"=" Total Project Cost	<u><u>\$ 168,250</u></u>