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***Rich Hill*, Winner of the Sundance Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary, Premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, January 5 on PBS**

(San Francisco, CA) — Produced and directed by Tracy Droz Tragos and Andrew Droz Palermo, ***Rich Hill*** goes inside the homes and lives of small town America, where kids confront heartbreaking choices, marginalized parents struggle to survive, and families cling to the promise of equal opportunity and a better life — someday. The film follows three teenage boys, Andrew, Harley, and Appachey, as they struggle with isolation, broken families, and lack of opportunity, providing an immersive and realistic picture of growing up poor in America. Winner of the 2014 Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary, *Rich Hill* premieres on *Independent Lens* on Monday, January 5, 2015, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

Rich Hill, Missouri, population 1393, is seventy miles south of Kansas City and fifteen miles east of the Kansas border. Once a thriving mining town, Rich Hill's decline began when the coal was mined out shortly after World War II. Today, like many other small towns in America, it has fallen on hard times, as have the families who still call it home.

First cousins Tracy Droz Tragos and Andrew Droz Palermo share a deep bond and affection for Rich Hill, the hometown of their parents. Despite its current bleak circumstances, they felt drawn to portray the daily challenges townspeople face, and to focus in particular on the lives of three teenage boys. The film bears witness to the challenges facing the millions of American children living in rural poverty today, and reveals the sustaining power of family bonds. While there is sometimes shame in their circumstances, these children have immense pride in their families, however fractured they may be, because family means having a reason for being, and a place in the world.

“At its heart, our film is an invitation to empathy, to share a connection with those who might otherwise be avoided and dismissed,” said Tragos. “Out of that place of connectedness and shared humanity, we hope audiences will question how we justify denying resources and social capital to vulnerable families, who are, at the most fundamental level, so much like our own.”

Visit the *Rich Hill* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/rich-hill>) which features information about the film, including an interview with the filmmakers and links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter.

About the Filmmakers

Tracy Droz Tragos (Producer/Director) is an award-winning independent filmmaker. *Rich Hill* won the Grand Jury Prize for U.S. Documentary at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, as well as Best Film at Michael Moore's Traverse City Film Festival, Best Direction Award at the Sarasota Film Festival, Best Heartland Film at the Kansas City Film Festival, and Best Generation Next at



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the Documentary Edge Film Festival. Before its *Independent Lens* broadcast, *Rich Hill* was released theatrically in over 80 markets across the United States.

Tragos's first film was *Be Good, Smile Pretty*, a powerful documentary about the profound and complicated feelings of loss caused by the deaths of American men in the Vietnam War, some thirty-five years later. The film aired on *Independent Lens* and won the 2004 Emmy for Best Documentary, as well as The Jury Award for Best Documentary at the Los Angeles Film Festival, and a Cine Golden Eagle Award. Tragos participated in a yearlong engagement campaign reaching thousands of veterans and their families. The film continues to be used by the VA and veteran's organizations as a tool to support veterans' processing of grief and their transition home.

Tragos is currently in production on two documentaries that focus on the challenges facing girls in America: one from the perspective of a vulnerable teenage mother and her son in the Midwest; the other from the perspective of girls at a private school in Brentwood, California, who are being groomed to be leaders. She also is working on a political film commissioned by HBO.

Tragos' work has received support from the Sundance Institute, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, ITVS, and others. She is a Film Independent Documentary Lab and Sundance Lab alumnae, participating as both a director and a producer. This year, Tragos is one of six filmmakers invited to participate in Sundance's Women Filmmakers Initiative. Tragos holds a B.A. in writing in fiction from Northwestern University and an M.F.A. in screenwriting from USC.

Andrew Droz Palermo (Producer/Director/Cinematographer), a Missouri native, is currently in post-production on his narrative feature debut titled *One & Two*, a dark fairy tale following two kids with unusual abilities. Moving fluidly between directing and cinematography, in early 2014 he shot Hannah Fidell's *6 Years*, produced by Mark Duplass.

He was tapped as one of *Filmmaker Magazine's* "25 New Faces of Independent Film of 2013," and served as cinematographer on films such as *You're Next* (directed by Adam Wingard), *A Teacher* (directed by Hannah Fidell), and *Black Metal* (directed by Kat Candler). Palermo currently lives in Los Angeles.

CREDITS

Produced and Directed by	Tracy Droz Tragos and Andrew Droz Palermo
Editor	Jim Hession
Music by	Nathan Halpern
Director of Photography	Andrew Droz Palermo
Executive Producers	Robert A. Compton and Michael J. Zak
Co-Producers	David Armillei and Chris Tragos

About *Independent Lens*

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

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