

1. **Raise Hell, The Life and Times of Molly Ivins** ©2019. Documentary . Dir. Janice Engel. 92 min. Molly Ivins (1944-2007) is a columnist from Texas. The DVD extra clips of Molly's speeches were just as good as the ones in the film. "Polarizing people is a good way to win an election and wreck a country." I saw Molly Ivins in person once in the 1990's when Anne Richardson was Governor of Texas. She took questions from the audience, including "What do you think of Anne Richardson and Hillary Clinton?" Molly's whip-smart response: "Is that a ticket?"
2. **Just Mercy** ©2019. Dir. Destin Daniel Cretton. 136 min. Docudrama based on the book by Bryan Stevenson. Michael B. Jordan plays Bryan Stevenson; Also starring Jamie Fox, Walter McMillan and Brie Larson. Young Harvard lawyer defends the wrongly condemned in Alabama on a shoestring. Well told. Powerful.
3. **The Glorias** ©2020. Dir. Julie Taymor. 139 min. With Julianne Moore and Alicia Vikander as Gloria Steinem. Docudrama representing Gloria Steinem's life starting in childhood, by different actresses. Including current footage of the present Gloria Steinem (1934-), still an activist for women's issues. Sundance Film Festival.
4. **Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution** ©2020. Directors Nicole Newnham and James Lebrecht. 107 min. Documentary about Camp Jened (1951-1977) for kids with disabilities that lives on in the memories of the campers as a glorious time and a turning point in their lives. It's a miracle that archival footage of this place was found and restored. The second part of this film is about all the Camp alums that brought us the Americans w/ Disabilities Act (1990). I saw this at Sundance with Buffy. We went to all the related forums, and met Jim Lebrecht, a Crip Camp alum. We went to one event showing a wheelchair dance piece. The ramp shaded towards a half pipe. Alice Sheppard, the choreographer, is devoted to dance. About Camp Jened, Lebrecht says, I was *popular* there!" Now on Netflix.
5. **Giving Voice** ©2020. Directors James V. Stern and Fernando Villena. 87 min. Documentary about the annual August Wilson monologue contest. We see the teenaged contestants at home, at school, and in regional competitions, then the final 20 competing on Broadway, and enjoying NYC together. There's an epilogue. Several contestants are studying drama in college. One is at Juilliard. Seen at Sundance.
6. **Dream Horse** ©2020. Dir. Euros Lyn. A feel-good movie set in Wales with Toni Collette and Damian Lewis. Sundance. I also watched the 2015 *documentary* on which this is based, **Dark Horse**. The feature film is accurate.
7. **Minari** ©2020. Dir. Lee Isaac Chung. 115 min. The director based this story on his own youth. An immigrant Korean family moves from California to rural Arkansas to fulfill the father's dream of farming. Both parents work at a chicken farm on the side for cash, while the grandmother, fresh off the boat, minds the kids. In the Sundance Q&A the director told us his father is still farming. I loved this film It won two major awards at Sundance.
8. **Mrs. Wilson** ©2018. Dir. Richard Laxton. 3 BBC mini-series episodes fit on one DVD. Actress Ruth Wilson plays her own real-life grandmother, Alison, who was widowed in 1963, after 22 years of marriage to a British intelligence officer, 2 sons. After Alec's death Alison was shocked to learn he was a serial bigamist! The drama flashes back to their courtship during the war. All four of Alec's wives had offspring. Fiona Shaw plays Coleman, Alec Wilson's handler in MI-5. We see current photos of Alec Wilson's sons and their descendants. See, Alec was a Catholic so he could not divorce. Based on Alison's memoir. It took Alison until 1967 to come clean with her sons. The funeral was awkward, because several wives wanted to come, yet Alison was hiding them from her sons. Afterwards Alison entered a sort of convent where she remained for the last 35 years of her life.
9. **AlphaGo** ©2017. Dir. Greg Kohs. 90 min. documentary. You don't have to know how to play Go to be fascinated. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXuK6gekU1Y> We see Demis Hassabis and team at DeepMind (now owned by Google) developing AI in Cambridge, U.K., and early trials against the European champion, Fan Hui. Then there's the thrilling 5-game match in Seoul of AlphaGo vs Lee Sedol, the world's best Go player, in March 2015. Gripping, stimulating and entertaining. Watching people really interested in something is fun.
10. **The Chi, the complete first season.** David Rodriguez directed 3 of the 10 episodes, 6 others directed the rest.. ©2018. Set on the South Side of Chicago. Wonderful casting. Usually I do not enjoy stories about the underclass, but I fell in love with these characters. We see a bad cop and a good cop. We see the community. I love the bright 11 year old fat kid played by Shamon Brown who says things like "I'm going to need a healthy option." Hulu.
11. **Unorthodox** ©2020. Dir. Maria Schrader. 4-part mini-series on Netflix. Based on a memoir by Deborah Feldman. But names have been changed, as well as details of Etsy Schwartz's (played by Shira Haas) experiences in Berlin. It was followed by a 20 minute video, **Making Unorthodox**. Starts in the Hassidic community of Brooklyn.
12. **The Crown**, season 3. ©2019. The first 4 episodes are directed by Benjamin Caron, then 2 by Christian Schwochow, then 2 each by Jessica Hobbs and Sam Donovan. Olivia Coleman plays the middle-aged Queen. Helena Bonham-Carter plays Margaret now. Tobias Menzies plays Philip. I didn't like him as much as Matt Smith who played the young Philip. Josh O'Connor plays Prince Charles winningly. Emerald Fennell plays Camilla Parker-Bowles.(She played Patsy Mound, a nurse on **Call the Midwife**, a show I continued to enjoy this year) Takes us up to Elizabeth and Philip's 25th anniversary. Princess Margaret frolics on Mustique. Anthony Armstrong-Jones is her ex by now.
13. **My Dog Tulip** ©2010. Directed & animated by Paul & Sandra Fierlinger. 82 min. It's faithful to the book of the same title by J.R. Ackerley (see my 2013 book list). Voices of Christopher Plummer, Lynn Redgrave, and Isabella Rossellini. The score is just right too. I freeze framed some of it as fodder for my jigsaw puzzle app.

14. ***Chernobyl***. ©2019. Dir. Johan Renck. 5-part mini-series from the library, with Stellan Skarsgaard and Jeremy Harris. Emily Watson plays a composite of all the scientists who sought to understand. The *system* was guilty. “It’s only 3.6 roetegens.” “That’s actually quite a lot. We should evacuate.” “Policy is not your remit. Just answer the technical questions.” As it turned out 3.6 was as high as the instrument went. They got a more powerful instrument. It maxed out at 100 roetegens. A very gripping dramatization, and a cautionary tale about secrecy, whitewashing, and finger pointing. I read ***Midnight in Chernobyl*** by Adam Higginbotham (14 hr e-book) ©2019. It draws on a hundred hours of interviews over 10 years, unpublished memoirs, and recently de-classified archives. The book doesn’t take liberties like composite characters. We learn in the epilogue the fate of the people involved on April 2, 1986, when the reactor exploded. There were extraordinary acts of heroism that day by individuals.
15. ***Becoming*** ©2020. Dir. Nadia Hallgren. 89 min. Not the animated book, but a documentary about Michelle Obama’s book tour for the book. We listen to Michelle talking about the book, and people’s reactions to it. Good. Netflix.
16. ***A Secret Love*** ©2020. Dir. Chris Bolan. 83 min. Netflix documentary in the genre of ***A Very Long Engagement*** which was on my 2013 list. Terry and Pat were farm girls from Saskatchewan. They told Chicagoans they were cousins (except their inner circle). They told relatives for 65 years that housing was expensive in Chicago so they roomed together. They came out to their relatives as old ladies when they had to make assisted living decisions. Pat’s brother said “Don’t tell anyone else.” Lots of old photos of their happy life together.
17. ***Unbelievable*** ©2019. Created by Michael Chabon, Ayelet Waldman, and Susannah Grant. I binge-watched the whole miniseries on Netflix. Two male detectives botched a rape case in Washington State. They gaslighted and threatened an 18 yr old 6 months out of foster care until she said she made it up. She’s played by Kaitlyn Dever. Then they closed the rape case and charged her with making a false report. Cut to episode 2 where there’s another rape case in Colorado, then a series of 3 more, same M.O., always in different police jurisdictions. This time two women detectives are on two of the cases and they find each other and wonder if the perp knows enough about police methods to know how poor inter-jurisdiction communication is. Toni Collette plays one of the detectives.
18. ***Mrs. America*** ©2020. 9 episodes, 3 directors. Hulu. Cate Blanchett stars as Phyllis Schlafly. Her husband is played by John Slattery, a familiar face from ***Mad Men***. Margo Martindale plays Bella Abzug. 1970’s period drama.
19. ***The Cakemaker*** ©2017. Dir. Orif Raul Graizer. Israel and Germany. Tim Kalkhof as Thomas, Sarah Adler as Anat, Tamir Ben-Yehuda as Itai. I see it’s been sold for a re-make. It’s just right as it is! Thomas is an appealing young German, master baker at the Konditerai in Berlin he inherited from his grandmother. He and Oren, a married Israeli businessman who comes to Berlin once/month, fall in love. Oren disappears. He’s been killed in an accident. Thomas goes to Jerusalem and insinuates himself into Oren’s family because he’s fascinated & obsessed with Oren.
20. ***Capitalism: A Love Story*** ©2009. Dir. Michael Moore. 127 min. Entertaining and thought-provoking. Like Moore, I am for Democracy. Unlike him, I do not think that Capitalism is irredeemable, at least not in a country where there is enough wealth for some people to be reasonably rich while those on the bottom still have the basics. I can see why in a poor country the people might vote to more equally distribute the wealth. I was scandalized that former Senator Christopher Dodd (D-Conn) got sweetheart deals from Countryside. Capitalism does need oversight.
21. ***Saving Face*** ©2005. Dir. Alice Wu. 97 min. A RomCom set in the immigrant community of NYC. Wilhemina (Wil) is a 28 yr old resident surgeon. Her 48 yr. old mother, Ma (Joan Chen), a widow these past 20 years, lives with her parents. Ma is pregnant. She won’t say who the father is. Her father throws her out. Ma moves in with Wil. Michelle Krusiec plays Wil, Lynn Chen Viv, Wil’s love interest. The DVD extras are about the Sundance premiere.
22. ***Dark Waters*** ©2019. Dir. Todd Haynes. 126 min. Docudrama about a 20-year court case against DuPont for poisoning water in W. Va., starring Mark Ruffalo as the driven lawyer, Rob Bilott, and Anne Hathaway as his wife. Bucky Bailey, whose mother was on the Teflon Line, & gave birth to Bucky with one nostril & 1 eye, plays himself. Really good story-telling of a true story. MaryDan worked at that plant 1969-1970 as a Fortran programmer.
23. ***Wild, Wild Country*** ©2018. Dirs Maclain & Chapman Way. 6-part Netflix documentary about an Indian guru, Bhagwan Rajneesh (1931-1990), and the community he established for a few heady years 1980-85 near Antelope, Oregon. Archival footage of the sect at all stages—it began as an ashram in India in 1968—is incorporated. What’s truly fascinating are the recent interviews with Sheela and other leaders from those days reflecting on it all. They are *wonderful* interviewees. There was a lot to admire about Rajneeshpurim, but some indefensible actions too.
24. ***The Way I See It*** ©2020. Dir. Dawn Porter. 102 min. Documentary about the work of Pete Souza, official White House photographer, who covered the Reagan and Obama administrations, with emphasis on the Obamas.
25. ***Immigration Nation*** ©2020. 6-part Netflix documentary that does not say how the laws need to be reformed. Rather it shows us many aspects of the need, and stimulates the viewer to think about what we might try. An eye-opener.
26. ***Seven Seconds*** ©2018. 10-episodes on Netflix. Opens with a hit & run involving an off-duty cop, Jablonski, and a black teenager, Brenton Butler, who’s on a bike. A cop killing a black kid would adversely affect the entire team, not just Jablonski, says team leader DiAngelo. We get absorbed in the corruption of the detective unit Jablonski has just joined, and the teenager’s family. Timely in that it deals with policing, and black lives mattering. The prosecutor, K.J. Harper (Clare-Hope Ashitey) is a black woman with personal problems. I came to like Fish Rinaldi (Michael Mosley), the white detective assigned to work with K.J. My favorite part was the trial. Regina King plays Latrice Butler, the bereaved mother. Turns out Brenton had his own secrets. Isaiah Butler (Russell Hornsby), the boy’s father, was overly strict. Gretchen Mol plays defense lawyer Sam Hennessy. Similar genre to ***The Chi***.