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LEF Announces \$50,000 in Early Development and Pre-Production Funding to New England-based Documentary Filmmakers

CAMBRIDGE, MA — The LEF Foundation has awarded **12 Moving Image Fund grants totaling \$50,000** in support of feature-length documentary works by New England-based filmmakers.

The **LEF Moving Image Fund** invests in films that demonstrate excellence in technique, strong storytelling ability, and originality of artistic vision and voice. The most recent round of awards to New England-based documentary filmmakers includes four grants of \$2,500 to projects at the Early Development stage, and eight grants of \$5,000 to projects at the Pre-production stage.

At LEF's June 2020 deadline for Early Development and Pre-production, 40 applications were received from filmmakers working across New England. Three peer readers, all of whom are local filmmakers representing a diverse range of perspectives on documentary, were each invited to independently review and share comments on 30 eligible Pre-production grant applications, and these peer evaluations informed LEF's final decision to award eight Pre-production grants in this round.

LEF Executive Director Lyda Kuth shared: **“From its inception, we have convened an outside panel for our Production and Post Production grant review. The panels are comprised of different people each year, which means varying points of view and fresh perspectives are brought to the review of projects. In addition, the review introduces the work of New England filmmakers to the broader independent community. Similarly, we wanted to bring a range of perspectives to the Pre-production grant review and invited readers into the process. We invited filmmakers from the New England community to review and provide comments on projects, understanding the value this can bring. It could also be a learning opportunity for the readers, in seeing how other filmmakers were presenting their films at an early stage.”**

LEF staff also reviewed the 10 eligible Early Development grant applications at this newly added grant stage and four projects were selected, offering initial seed funding to filmmakers who have not yet had a chance to shoot or edit any sample footage for their current projects.

LEF Program Officer Genevieve Carmel shared, **“This was the first year that LEF offered a new Early Development grant for four New England-based documentary filmmakers at the earliest stages of their process. We couldn't be more excited to explore an expansion of LEF's Moving Image Fund in this way, and this will be a learning process**

for us, informing how we approach future funding programs. By removing the current visual sample requirement at the Early Development stage, our goal was to learn more about and support projects in development by filmmakers who have not been able to create a visual sample for their current work, whether due to COVID-19 or where some initial seed funding might address the unique requirements of a project.”

All applicants who applied for LEF funding at this stage will have an opportunity to hear review notes by phone, to learn more about how their proposals were evaluated, and to ask any questions. Carmel added, **“Being transparent about our decision-making process is important to us, and we hope that sharing notes from the review can be a source of information and encouragement for applicants as they continue working on their projects. We also understand that sharing where there may have been enthusiasm or any remaining questions about each applicant’s project keeps the communication lines open between LEF as a funder and the filmmakers who apply.”**

In addition to this group of grantees, LEF will also award \$190,000 to 10 projects in Production and Post-Production later in the fiscal year, following the next January 2021 application deadline. **In total, LEF will be distributing \$240,000 in funding to documentary productions over the course of its 2021 fiscal year.**

See the attached list of Grantees and Bios.

Please check www.lef-foundation.org for details regarding LEF Moving Image Fund guidelines and eligibility. For more information on the Foundation or its funded projects, please contact Program Officer Genevieve Carmel at gen@lef-foundation.org

Summer 2020 LEF Moving Image Fund Grantees:

Early Development (\$2,500)



No Holding Back: William Monroe Trotter's Challenge to President Woodrow Wilson (w.t.)

Directed and Produced by Alvin Case (MA)

When the newly elected president of the United States Woodrow Wilson ordered the segregation of black and white federal workers in 1913 he was challenged by William Monroe Trotter, the Black firebrand journalist and publisher from Boston, during two meetings in the Oval Office. NO HOLDING BACK pictures a bridge between these past events and how they align with the present through "direct address" re-enactment, and through contemporary voices who shed light on the continued fight against the weight of racial history in this country.



Love in the Time of Corona

Directed and Produced by Iyabo Kwayana (NH)

During the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020, Ananda, a quantum physicist conducting interviews with prominent figures about the nature of reality, is on the brink of an existential crisis. Separated from her family, friends, and partner and witnessing an explosion of social unrest, she is thrust into a sobering yet magical journey that leads her towards a breakthrough in her understanding of quantum physics, the structures that separate humanity, and those that bind us together. A hybrid documentary, LOVE IN THE TIME OF CORONA will explore paradigm shifts including the crumbling of structures, ideas, and ways of being so as to make way for the birthing of realities unimagined, a reality that COVID-19 starkly illustrates



Untitled Altered States Film

Directed by Julie Mallozzi and Emma Meyers; Produced by Julie Mallozzi (MA)

Seven traditions from around the world transport patients into an altered mental state to treat medical conditions, mental illness, and chronic pain. Intertwining ancient practices and their modern offshoots, this experiential film reveals the possibility of deep healing when we allow our brains to depart from their ordinary functioning.



the place of bad noises

Directed by Josh Weissbach (CT)

Before the landscape had an official history that was crafted by the natives, reconstructed by the settlers, and revised by the scientists, there were the bad noises. THE PLACE OF BAD NOISES will be an essay film utilizing experimental and non-fiction techniques to explore what has become of all the badness that has been historically associated with the noises located in Moodus, Connecticut. In addition, the film will investigate the psychological impact sound has on shaping an experience of place.

Pre-Production (\$5,000)



Power & Light

Directed and Produced by Sabrina Aviles (MA), Jesse Epstein (MA), Marion Lipschutz and Rose Rosenblatt

Pastors, priests and ministers in the Latinx town of Lawrence MA are fighting for climate justice. Brought together by a massive gas explosion, they were making remarkable progress when a second calamity, the Coronavirus, again put them on the front lines. Distributing food, offering shelter, ministering to the sick, they gained a new understanding of “creation care,” the controversial belief that stewardship of the earth’s fragile ecosystem is part of the religious duty. When the Pandemic lifts, they’ll join with suburban allies in Andover and North Andover, to continue a political and spiritual fight that puts vulnerable communities like theirs at the center of a movement to slow, even halt, the cascade of crises brought about by the existential threat of climate change.



Life Doesn't Frighten Me

Directed and Produced by Sara Jordanö (RI)

LIFE DOESN'T FRIGHTEN ME is an experimental personal documentary and a community portrait about the fight for parentage rights. As the filmmaker is facing the humiliating, expensive and invasive process of having to adopt her own daughter, she connects with a network of LGBTQ+ families and advocates who are working to change discriminatory parentage laws. The film documents community activist efforts to legally redefine who is considered a parent and the personal process of claiming parenthood as a same-sex partner.



Hannah

Directed and Produced by Siobhan Landry (MA)

At a small New England historic house an actress performs the part of Hannah Dustin, a woman who killed and scalped 10 Wabanaki in the late 17th century.

Documentation of this performance is shared with and critiqued by a series of interpreters, including local tribe members, historians, and anthropologists. Through dialogue and performance the story replays itself multiple times, raising challenging questions about the intersection of white female identity and American founding mythologies.



School District

Directed and Produced by Leigh Morfoot and Jason Morfoot (CT)

SCHOOL DISTRICT closely observes Stamford Public Schools working through the coronavirus pandemic. From determining how and when to safely bring students back into classrooms to assessing and addressing the learning losses and achievement gaps exacerbated by buildings being shut down, this feature documentary captures the reimagining of a Title-1, public education system in the Connecticut suburbs of New York City.



Recovery City (w.t.)

Directed by Lisa Olivieri (MA); Produced by Lisa Olivieri and Angelica Brisk

RECOVERY CITY is an intimate, unflinching study of four women whose lives have all been touched by addiction. Separately these stories each touch upon different aspects of recovery. Together the narratives intersect to create a compelling portrait of women who refuse to let their community give in to the stigma and despair of addiction.



Morning View

Directed and Produced by Matt Shaw (ME)

In 1824 the reverend Jonathan Fisher completes his last large painting "A Morning View of Blue Hill Village." This artistic culmination of a rural polymath will become the first entry in books on landscape painting in Maine and the land it represents will drastically change over the next 200 years. This film traces Fisher's art onto the contemporary landscape of Blue Hill.



Red Spectrum (English w.t., Chinese w.t. 红光谱)

Directed and Produced by Wenhua Shi (MA)

RED SPECTRUM (working title) is an experimental essayistic documentary through a personal portrait of the city Wuhan, China. It captures the strange moments of time and space where old and new ideological practices and tragedies entangle. Through observational and experimental approaches, RED SPECTRUM builds an impression of his hometown.



Paradise

Directed by Gabrielle Sumney; Produced by Nerissa Williams Scott (MA)

PARADISE is a personal documentary exploring race, immigration, and imperialism through the filmmaker's multiracial Caribbean American family.

Director Bios (Alphabetically by Last Name)

Sabrina Aviles, Jesse Epstein, Marion Lipschutz, Rose Rosenblatt: Sabrina has worked on many PBS programs including “American Experience,” and the Peabody winning “Latino Americans,” and she’s the Executive Director of the Boston Latino International Film Festival. Jesse is a Sundance Award-Winner whose films have shown at MoMA, MaSS MoCA and on POV. Marion and Rose’s feature documentaries have aired on PBS’s POV, (twice), and on Independent Lens. They’ve won top awards at Sundance, Full Frame, Native American Film&Video, SXSW, and more.

Alvin Case is an American filmmaker born in the Dominican Republic. He graduated with a BFA in Fine Art Printmaking, Design, and Photography, and is self-taught in Cinematography. His fine art videos screened at Scope Art Basel and in Paris in 2009-2010. His first narrative feature *The Whirlpool*, premiered at Rotterdam in 2012. Since then he has directed eight feature length narrative and documentary films, including the award-winning hybrid-documentary *The Nude* (2018). He directed the live action drama *In the Moon's Shadow* (2019) which features scenes captured during the 2017 Great American Eclipse. Acting as producer or co-producer on all of his films, he writes, directs, and is the cinematographer on all projects he's worked on. A believer in the direct cinema approach of Frederick Wiseman and the blending of drama and documentary in the works of Peter Watkins, his refined aesthetic is the result of many years of experience as a studio artist where scant resources are never a barrier in completing a work.

Sara Jordenö is a documentary filmmaker and assistant professor of film at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Her practice resides in the intersection of activism, visual sociology and documentary cinema. Jordenö’s work often focuses on subcultures and social movements. Jordenö directed the award-winning documentary feature film *KIKI* about a youth-led social movement for LGBTQ+ youth of color in NYC. It was the product of a close collaboration with community leaders Twiggy Pucci Garcon, Gia Marie Love and other members of the NYC Kiki scene. *KIKI* premiered in the US Documentary Competition at the Sundance Film Festival in 2016, has been shown in over 200 film festivals around the world and had theatrical releases in Sweden, the US and the UK, as well as on streaming platforms. Jordenö is the recipient of numerous awards such as an Art Matters Award (2012) the Teddy Award for Best Documentary Film at the Berlin International Film Festival (2016), the Kathleen Bryan Edwards Award for Human Rights at Full Frame Documentary Festival (2016) and the Edstrandska Stiftelsens Art Award (2019). Jordenö was a nominee for the 2017 Film Independent Spirit Truer Than Fiction Award. She has been written about in the *New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *LA Times* and many other publications.

Iyabo Kwayana is an artist and filmmaker who uses immersive techniques in cinematography, directing and editing to mobilize and amplify the more discreet, often hidden aspects of film narratives, compelling viewers towards a transformative experience. Her work spans from serving as director of photography for fiction films, to director and co-cinematographer for award-winning documentaries such as the Visions du Réel premiered *Practice*, co-cinematographer for the Locarno premiered *Palenque*, to directing and editing experimental films that leverage minstrel imagery and NASA footage to articulate personal trauma and catharsis. Her work has been recognized by entities such as BAFTA and has won jury awards both internationally and domestically. She earned an MFA in Film Production (a dual track of Cinematography and Directing) from UCLA, where her student film *Macarrão* was shortlisted for a student Academy Award, and she earned an MFA in Documentary Media from Northwestern University. She teaches filmmaking at Dartmouth College.

Siobhan Landry is a filmmaker and video artist whose work considers the shifting terrain between the uncanny and the commonplace, the humorous and the harrowing, the personal and the historical. She has recently shown work at the New Bedford Art Museum, Boston University 808 Gallery, and the Visual Centre for Contemporary Art in Carlow, Ireland, and has been awarded residency fellowships at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and Lighthouse Works. Landry works professionally as a producing video editor at HarvardX and received a Mass Cultural Council Fellowship in Film & Video in 2019.

Julie Mallozzi is a documentary filmmaker whose work explores the ways cultural traditions from around the globe intersect, hybridize, and are turned to new social purposes far from their original context. Her films – including *ONCE REMOVED*, *MONKEY DANCE*, *INDELIBLE LALITA*, and *CIRCLE UP* – have won awards at numerous festivals, been broadcast nationally on public television, and screened widely in educational and community contexts. She is passionate about leveraging the power of the cinematic experience to create positive social impact. Julie received her BA from Harvard University and her MFA from San Francisco Art Institute. She teaches in the Department of Art, Film, and Visual Studies at Harvard University and is Administrative Director of its Film Study Center.

Emma Meyers, a recent graduate of Harvard Medical School and neurology resident at The Massachusetts General and Brigham and Women's Hospitals, is driven by an interest in the patient perspective on illness and healing. Academically, her focus is on coping with severe neurological conditions, particularly the effect of mindfulness on symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD in patients with acute brain injuries and their family members. Her work centers on the intersection of illness and identity, and where these come in contact with the healthcare system. She came to filmmaking while

at Harvard as a way to give a voice to these issues visually and sonically, allowing for a complexity and humanity that is often lacking from conventional medical approaches

Leigh and Jason Morfoot cut their filmmaking teeth with the Maysles Films family and have been producing and directing fiction and non-fiction, shorts and features for twenty years. Throughout this time, one or the other has been a full-time staff member in the documentary division at the American Museum of Natural History. Leigh as production manager for nine years and Jason, who is now on staff, as senior producer and editor for eleven years. Our narrative short, IN-BETWEEN WORLDS premiered at the San Francisco International Film Festival, CAPITAL: IMPRESSIONS OF EARLY EMPIRE premiered at Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin and our feature documentary CITIZEN 3.0 is distributed by Filmmakers Library.

Lisa Olivieri's first documentary, Blindsided, is an intimate portrait of Patricia Livingstone, a feisty artist slowly losing her sight and hearing while surviving an abusive same-sex relationship. The film has won numerous awards, including the Artistic Achievement Award in Directing from the qFLIX Film Festival/Worcester, and the Jury Award for Best Documentary from The Women's Film Festival/Philadelphia. Blindsided aired on Maine Public Television in 2016 and received national grants from LEF Foundation, Frameline Film and Video Completion Fund, Women in Film Foundation and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. She is currently filming and directing her second documentary, Recovery City, about women in recovery in Worcester, MA. Lisa also teaches film and photography at Natick High School in Natick, MA.

Matt Shaw: Through an interest in histories of place that recognize the relationship between humans and other species, Matt Shaw's work explores the intersection of experimental and documentary filmmaking through research, conversation, and observation to read the landscape as archive. Born in New York's Hudson Valley, he received his BA in Human Ecology from College of the Atlantic and his MFA in Moving Image from the University of Illinois at Chicago. He lives and works on the coast of Maine.

Wenhua Shi, an Assistant Professor of Art at UMass-Boston, pursues a poetic approach to moving image making, and investigates conceptual depth in film, video, interactive installations and sound sculptures. His work has been presented at museums, galleries, and film festivals, including International Film Festival Rotterdam, European Media Art Festival, Athens Film and Video Festival, Ann Arbor Film Festival, Black Maria Film and Video Festival, Pacific Film Archive, West Bund 2013: a Biennale of Architecture and Contemporary art, Shanghai, Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism, and the Arsenale of Venice in Italy. He had received awards including Light Press Grant (2020), the New York Foundation for the Arts (2015) and the New York State Council on the Arts (2015).

Gabby Sumney is a media artist and educator based in Boston, Massachusetts. They work in experimental nonfiction with a special emphasis on issues of identity and personal narrative. Their work has screened at curated screenings and festivals internationally including Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival, Indie Grits, and Cellular Cinema. Gabby is also the creator of This Week in Experimental, a weekly newsletter that features links to experimental films & videos, reading suggestions, and optional assignments.

Josh Weissbach is an experimental filmmaker. He lives in a house with his wife, two daughters, and three cats next to a once abandoned village. His movies have been shown worldwide in such venues as Ann Arbor Film Festival, Slamdance Film Festival, Paris Festival for Different and Experimental Cinema, 25 FPS Festival, and Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival. He has won jury prizes at Videoex, ICDOCS, \$100 Film Festival, Onion City Experimental Film and Video Festival, Berlin Revolution Film Festival, and Haverhill Experimental Film Festival. He is the recipient of a Cary Grant Film Award from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA, a Mary L. Nohl Fellowship for Emerging Artists from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, and a LEF Fellowship from the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar.

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