LEF Announces $47,500 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 $47,500 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 five grants of $2,500 to projects at the Early Development stage, and seven grants of $5,000 to projects at the Pre-production stage.

At LEF’s June 2021 deadline for Early Development and Pre-production, 33 applications were received from filmmakers working across New England. Three peer readers, all of whom are local filmmakers representing a diversity of perspectives on documentary, were each invited to review, discuss, and make recommendations on the applications, and these peer evaluations informed LEF staff’s final grant decisions.

LEF Executive Director Lyda Kuth shared: “Over the past year, LEF has expanded our peer review process beyond our long-standing commitment to an external review panel, now inviting a group of peer readers from across New England to make recommendations at two earlier stages of the application process. We are grateful to our peer reviewers for their thoughtful review and their insights into each of the projects, which provide a tremendous learning opportunity for LEF and for the filmmakers who applied. Based on reader feedback we received last year, we invited this round of three peer readers to participate in a conversation about the applications and share their responses to the work, before they submitted their final individual recommendations.”

While LEF has historically offered grants at the Pre-production stage, this was only the second year of offering grants at the Early Development stage, giving initial seed funding to filmmakers who have not yet had a chance to shoot or edit any sample footage for their current projects.

All applicants who applied for LEF funding for both Pre-production and Early Development will have an opportunity to receive review notes from staff to learn how their proposals were evaluated by the peer reviewers, and to ask any questions.
LEF Program Director Gen Carmel wrote, “Sharing peer review notes via individual phone calls with each of the applicants is something we’re committed to doing as a funder, so that every applicant feels the time put into applying for a LEF Moving Image Fund grant will lead to valuable insights into how their work-in-progress is being responded to, and where there may have been questions from a group of their peers. These shared phone calls are also an opportunity for us to hear from applicants on ways to improve the application process moving forward.”

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 2022 application deadline. **In total, LEF will be distributing $237,500 in funding to documentary productions over the course of its 2022 fiscal year.**

See the attached list of Grantees and Bios.

Please check [www.lef-foundation.org](http://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 Director Genevieve Carmel at gen@lef-foundation.org

**Summer 2021 LEF Moving Image Fund Grantees:**

**Early Development ($2,500)**

*CCTV: An Ethnography on Community Media Access*

*Directed and Produced by Myles David Jewell (VT)*

Started in 1984, CCTV/Town Meeting TV now houses one of the largest archives of civic engagement and community produced media in the state of Vermont. This ethnography will illuminate what the shifting media landscape means for CCTV, and how the organization continues and sustains its mission as technology changes and community development remains as important as ever.
**Slinging Cartoon Rifles**

**Directed by** [Malic Amalya](#) (MA)

Controversy over their high school mascot, the Rebels, began to rock the small town of South Burlington, Vermont in 2015 when a former history teacher spoke out against the school's historical alliance with the Southern Confederacy. Racist vandalism, stalking, legal disputes, and a "kill list" ensued. "Slinging Cartoon Rifles" is a feature-length, 16mm film essay that traces the origins of South Burlington High School’s mascot, histories of colonialism and slavery in Vermont, acts of white supremacy, and the anti-racist activism—led by students of color—that ultimately persuaded the school board to drop the Rebels name in 2017.

**Too Dark to See (working title)**

**Directed and Produced by** [John Gianvito](#) (MA)

A contemporary political filmmaker revisits the legacy of forgotten American documentarian Allan Francovich. Francovich, who died in 1997 under murky circumstances, made a series of films focused on hidden histories of U.S. governmental malfeasance -- from Mississippi in the 1960s, to collusion with Central American death squads in the 1980s, to decades long involvements with terrorist networks in Europe and Africa.

**Untitled County Fair Movie**

**Directed and Produced by** [Patrick Marshall](#) (MA)

"A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and is so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an and and not by a but." -- John Berger

Untitled County Fair Movie is a documentary that will show the relationship between a pig and the child (8 - 12 years old) that is raising the pig to show it at the county fair. The movie will start around the birth of the pig and follow the relationship between the child and the pig for the 5-7 months until they show the pig at the fair.
Untitled Margaret Moxa Film
Directed by Adam Mazo & Jared Lank; Produced by Adam Mazo, N. Bruce Duthu & Maulian Dana (MA, ME, VT, NH)
The cascading intergenerational effects of government-sanctioned scalp bounty hunting of Native Peoples are revealed in the hidden epic of Wabanaki peacemaker, Margaret Moxa.

Pre-Production ($5,000)

Chelsea: An Essential City (working title)
Directed and Produced by Sabrina Avilés & Jenny Alexander (MA)
Chelsea: An Essential City (working title) is a documentary portrait of an immigrant Latinx city of essential workers. Through cinéma vérité stories of Chelsea’s residents, the film reveals how the coronavirus pandemic tests the resolve and resilience of this community. Chelsea provides a lens onto longstanding structural inequities laid bare by the pandemic as black and brown communities across America struggle under the disproportionate impact of COVID-19.

Flyover Country (working title)
Directed by Jessica Hankey (MA)
Flyover Country follows real-life passengers on a three day cross-country train ride as they struggle to make a scripted film. As boundaries progressively erode inside the compressed space of the train, the social and economic disparities among the crew, actors, and passengers become the real source of drama.
Te Puna Ora
Directed by Virginie Tetoofa; Produced by Kiran Jandu (MA); Co-produced by Riham Ezzaldeen
As the climate crisis threatens Tahiti, an alliance of women embarks on a sacred journey to protect their island home. TE PUNA ORA combines mythology and reality in a character-driven cinematic documentary that follows the lives of three Tahitian women as they discover and shape an environmental movement in Tahiti. We spend time with each woman at home and in the community, exploring the intricacies and complexities of managing family and relationships as they form an alliance on the front lines of climate change. At the heart of the story is a deep connection to nature and cultural heritage rich in knowledge, which is mirrored in the interwoven story of the Polynesian creation myth that guides them on their personal and environmental missions.

The Apocalyptic is the Mother of All Christian Theology
Directed by Jim Finn (ME); Produced by Jim Finn & Cat Mazza
Paul of Tarsus— who relentlessly expanded a Messianic Jewish sect around the Mediterranean— has inspired pedantic scolds, imperialists, bigots, wedding planners, poets, radical Catholics and liberation theologians. How is this possible? Combining humor with deep research and experimental techniques, this film will create a portrait of Paul’s ideological struggles and his profound influence.

The Disability Road Map (working title)
Directed by Dan Habib & Samuel Habib; Produced by Dan Habib (NH)
Samuel Habib, 21, wants to date, leave home, go to college. But he drives a 500-pound wheelchair and can have a seizure at any moment. Determined to find his path forward, he sets off in search of insights from America’s most rebellious disability activists. Will they empower him to launch the bold adult life he craves?
Under the Valley
Directed by Keely Kernan; Produced by Dan Frank (MA)
Under the high mountain desert of Colorado’s San Luis Valley water from the Rio Grande aquifer is pumped to the surface and sustains the valley. While the demand for this scarce resource continues to grow, local ranchers and farmers grapple with a shifting reality that threatens their way of life and existence in the valley.

We Want to Negotiate
Directed by Sofian Khan (CT); Produced by Jessie Motts & Joel Simon
ISIS has your children, and the US government ties your hands. What do you do next? "We Want to Negotiate" offers an in-depth exploration of the No Negotiation policy -- its origins, history and ethical implications.

Director and Producer Bios (Alphabetical by Last Name)

Jenny Alexander (Co-Producer/Co-Director) is a senior producer at Northern Light Productions and independent filmmaker. Her independent films focus on the impact of immigration policies on families. Her first film, "Detained," follows families in the aftermath of the largest workplace immigration raid in Massachusetts. Her award-winning films have screened at festivals in Tel Aviv, Poland, Germany and China as well as within the US. Her work with Northern Light includes producing the DiscoveryID documentaries "Confessions of the Boston Strangler" and "Whitey Bulger – The Making of the Monster" as well as numerous films for and interactive media for museums. Her latest project is an installation projection of an animated film celebrating the contributions of immigrants to Canada for the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. Prior to film, Jenny worked as a community organizer in Boston and a union organizer for the United Farm Workers and the Puerto Rican Worker’s Union. ([Back to project])

Malic Amalya's 16mm films and digital videos have screened in festivals and museums nationally and internationally, including in Ann Arbor Film Festival in Michigan, the Portland Art Museum in Oregon, the Museum of Northwest Art in Washington State, EXiS in Seoul, MIX Copenhagen, and the Scottish Queer Film Festival. Malic was the cinematographer for "Riot Acts," (2010) a feature-length documentary about transgender and gender variant musicians. "Riot Acts" is distributed by Outcast Films and won film festival awards at
TransScreen (Amsterdam), Reeling (Chicago), Translations (Seattle), Philadelphia Independent (Philadelphia), Park City Film Music (Utah), and Blooming LGBT (Indiana).

Malic holds an MFA in Film from the University of Illinois at Chicago and an MA in History and Theory of Contemporary Art from the San Francisco Art Institute. He is an Assistant Professor of Experimental Media and 16mm Filmmaking in the Visual and Media Art department at Emerson College. (⤴Back to project)

Sabrina Avilés (Co-Producer/Co-Director) is an award-winning independent filmmaker, whose work has taken her throughout Latin America, Canada and Europe. Her list of credits include: American Experience’s "American Comandante" (2015) and "The Raising of America" (2014), a PBS documentary series about early childhood development produced by California Newsreel. In 2012, she worked on the Peabody award-winning PBS series, "Latino Americans." In 2016, Ms. Avilés became the Executive Director of the Boston Latino International Film Festival, after having served as its Associate Director from 2004 - 2007. Her work as both BLIFF's director and as a local artist gives her unique access to New England non-profit organizations and the local press where she is a recognized leader in the community. Sabrina is a 2019 Flaherty Fellow, serves on the WGBH Community Advisory Board and is a board member of Filmmakers Collaborative. She earned a B.S. in Broadcasting/Film from Boston University. (⤴Back to project)

Ambassador Maulian Dana (Penobscot) is the playwright, film co-producer, and scholar on Untitled Margaret Moxa Film. Beginning at the age of 15, Maulian Dana has been a voice and champion for the people of her Penobscot Nation and others of the Wabanaki Alliance of Indigenous Tribes in the State of Maine. In high school Dana joined in the effort to help educate communities about the harm that using Native American mascots can bring to both Native American and non-Native American communities through repeated stereotyping. She continued her efforts at the University of Maine, Orono where she received the Margaret Chase Smith Public Policy Scholarship in 2005 and graduated in 2006 with a degree in political science. Through her role as her nation's Ambassador, Dana advocates for justice on issues ranging from protecting land and water, tribal sovereignty, violence against Native American women, eradication of the use of Native American mascots, and replacing Columbus Day with a holiday that honors the Indigenous communities present for thousands of years before European contact. Dana also reminds Mainers that the Native American communities' "stewardship of the lands and waters are part of what makes our state worthy of the nickname Vacationland." In her first year as Penobscot Nation Ambassador, Dana realized two of her long-time goals. Maine's legislature banned the use of Native American mascots in public schools and replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day. This is something that those of us who reside in other states envy. Dana's commitment to activism is demonstrated while serving on: Penobscot Tribal Council, Commission on the Status of Maine Indigenous, Tribal, Racial Populations, Ambassador of the Penobscot Nation, Board President of the Wabanaki Alliance, Board of Maine Center for Economic Policy, Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Maine Climate Council, and Board
of Out Maine. Maulian is a proud mother of two daughters, Carmella and Layla, and raises them at the Penobscot Nation with her partner Lloyd and their dog, Olive. (†Back to project)

N. Bruce Duthu, J.D., (Houma) is a film producer on Untitled Margaret Moxa Film. He served in the same role on Dawnland and First Light. Mr. Duthu, an internationally recognized scholar of Native American law and policy, is the Samson Occom Professor of Native American Studies at Dartmouth College. An enrolled member of the United Houma Nation of Louisiana, Duthu is the author of "Shadow Nations: Tribal Sovereignty and the Limits of Legal Pluralism" (Oxford University Press, 2013) and "American Indians and the Law" (Viking/Penguin, 2008) and co-producer of "A Way of Learning," a documentary film on Dartmouth's Native American Program, directed by Alanis Obomsawin. (†Back to project)

Jim Finn’s movies have been called ‘Utopian comedies’ and ‘trompe l’œil films’. His Communist Trilogy is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. “Steeped in the obsolete language of revolutionary art,” The New York Times wrote that "Mr. Finn’s meticulous, deadpan mockumentaries often play like unearthed artifacts from an alternate universe." His work has screened at international, avant-garde and underground film festivals like Rotterdam, Validivia, BAFICI, Edinburgh and the New York Film Festival as well as museums, universities, cinemathques and microcinemas. He was born in St. Louis in 1968 to a family of Midwestern Catholic salespeople. (†Back to project)

Dan Frank has produced and directed award-winning broadcast series and educational programming. He is a Lecturer/Visiting Faculty at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He directed Cool Spaces, a four-hour, four-part documentary on modern US architecture and was series producer on Digital Duo, a weekly series on the web and technology. He produced Invention and Alchemy, a concert film. All three programs aired on PBS. He was a coordinating producer on Boston: The Documentary, a 2-hour theatrical and broadcast release about the Boston marathon. His work has screened at festivals, theatrically and aired on networks that include Discovery, FOX, HGTV, TLC, and DIY. Dan assisted Keely on her interactive project, The Mississippi, which resulted in the documentary shorts, Of the Basin and By the River. Dan's most recent documentaries include Public Servants a behind the scenes look at volunteers on a political campaign and Never Again Para Nadie, a documentary (currently in post) about a protest against ICE detainees at a for-profit prison in Rhode Island that turned violent. (†Back to project)

John Gianvito is a filmmaker and Professor in the Department of Visual & Media Arts at Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts. His films include the dramatic feature THE MAD SONGS OF FERNANDA HUSSEIN (2001) (Jury Prize at the BAFICI Festival, first "Rosa Luxemburg Prize" and Best Independent Film at the New England Film/Video Festival) and the documentaries PROFIT MOTIVE AND THE WHISPERING WIND (2007) ("Best
Experimental Film of the Year" by the National Society of Film Critics (U.S.), Grand Prize for Documentary Feature at the Belfort EntreVues Film Festival), VAPOR TRAIL (CLARK) (2010) the collectively-made FAR FROM AFGHANISTAN (2012), and HER SOCIALIST SMILE (2020) (Los Angeles Film Critics' Award for Best Independent/Experimental Film of the Year). Gianvito is the editor of the book ANDREI TARKOVSKY: INTERVIEWS (University Press of Mississippi) and served for five years as curator of the Harvard Film Archive. (Back to project)

Dan Habib, Co-Director/Producer/Cinematographer, is the Director/Producer/Cinematographer of the nationally broadcast documentary films INTELLIGENT LIVES, WHO CARES ABOUT KELSEY?, MR. CONNOLLY HAS ALS and INCLUDING SAMUEL, as well as many other short, disability-related films. His films have been nominated for Emmy awards, translated into 17 languages, and used worldwide to support inclusive education and disability rights. From 2014-2017, Dan served on the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities under President Barack Obama. Dan is the Inclusive Communities Project Director at the Westchester Institute for Human Development. (Back to project)

Samuel Habib, Co-Director/Camera, is an aspiring filmmaker and community college student. In 2016, he made a film about disability rights leader Judith Heumann that was featured in the Breaking Down Barriers Film Festival in Moscow, Russia. Samuel was also a story consultant on Dan Habib's nationally broadcast film MR. CONNOLLY HAS ALS. He has been featured in magazine articles and has presented nationally on disability rights, inclusive education, and his educational and social transition to adulthood. Samuel is a multi-media production assistant at the Westchester Institute for Human Development. (Back to project)

Jessica Hankey is a Cambridge-based filmmaker and artist whose projects foreground the ways in which individual lives and sociopolitical realities merge together. These works blur the boundaries between documentary approaches and fictional drama in order to explore the role of performance in everyday life. A 2019 Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellow, Hankey attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2015 and has exhibited at venues that include the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, SPACE Gallery in Portland, Maine, The Rubin Center for the Visual Arts in El Paso, Texas, and Bowdoin College. Her work has been screened at Anthology Film Archives and Vox Populi, featured in Artforum, The Chart, and Glasstire. (Back to project)

Kiran Jandu, lead producer, is a queer Indian-American living in Northampton, Massachusetts. After graduating from Smith College in 2010, Kiran worked at J.P.Morgan, finishing as a VP in Corporate Responsibility. In 2017, Kiran shifted careers to focus on conservation and the power of constructive storytelling. Kiran has since worked alongside What Took You So Long to produce progressive films (Waynak), launched an ocean
conservation campaign (WeOcean), and been designated a United Nations-Nippon Fellow. Along this journey, Kiran connected with Hinano through the community of her young Tahitian child. Te Puna Ora has since revealed itself - Kiran's hope is that this unique story can reach the world at this critical time in our environmental juncture. (Back to project)

Myles David Jewell (Director, Producer, Editor) is a Burlington, VT based freelance filmmaker. He runs Pennington Productions and works independently on both feature documentaries and narrative films. He fills the gaps teaching documentary for social change, sports media, and community media production at the University of Vermont. He hopes to use filmmaking as a community building tool and is very interested in creating spaces for intergenerational transmission. He's hoping through collaboration on film projects, communities can create deeper connections. Myles earned a Master of Arts in Cinema Studies from New York University and an Advanced Certificate from The Program in Culture and Media, where he came across the work of George Stoney. His scholarship focuses on the tension between fiction and non-fiction and is rooted in Ethnographic approaches to media. He believes firmly in the ethics of representation and collaborative approaches to media production, while his practice fluctuates between minimal resource filmmaking and larger more technical productions. He is excited about starting a deep dive into the history of community based media production and collaboratively producing this ethnography with the folks at CCTV, including Lauren-Glenn Davitian and Meghan O'Rourke. The groundwork laid by them as well as Dan Higgins, will provide a road map to how this piece is produced, with a deep focus on collaboration. (Back to project)

Keely Kernan is an award-winning filmmaker, photographer and educator who grew up in the Appalachian mountains of southern Pennsylvania. She has traveled extensively both nationally and internationally to produce work for a variety of media outlets and non-profits. Her work focuses on topics such as the environment, the natural resources that we use daily, globalization, identity, and community. She is a recipient of the 2018 Princess Grace Award in film. Kernan has produced work for publications such as the Guardian and The Huffington Post. She has also screened and exhibited work at the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, DC Environmental Film Festival, Carnegie Institution for Science, Bright Lights Film Series partnering with MIT's Women Take the Reel Film Festival, American Conservation Film Festival, Environmental Film Festival at Yale, New Orleans International Film Festival, Charleston International Film Festival, The Natural Resources Defense Council, and The Gordon Parks Museum, among others. Keely also accompanied Kathryn Ramey to Puerto Rico for the filming of her LEF Fellowship project "El Signo Vacio (the empty sign)." (Back to project)

Sofian Khan is an Emmy-nominated director, producer and founder of Capital K Pictures. His feature documentary "The Interpreters" had its national broadcast premiere on PBS Independent Lens in the fall of 2019. Following the lives of Afghan and Iraqi interpreters targeted by insurgents for their work with American forces, it was made with support from
the MacArthur Foundation and ITVS, and was nominated for an Emmy in the News & Documentary category. Sofian is a 2019-2020 Sundance Institute Creative Producing Fellow and was included on the 2019 DOC NYC 40 Under 40 list. His short work has appeared on Field of Vision, Al Jazeera, NBC Digital, American Masters and The Atlantic Selects, and his 2018 short "Do We Belong?" was shortlisted for an IDA Award. And his short film for PBS American Masters "Street Level: Anik Khan" was nominated for an NAACP Image Award and won a 2021 Webby Award. (↑Back to project)

**Jared Lank** is a Mi’kmaq photographer, filmmaker, and advocate based in Portland, Maine. Born and raised in Maine, Jared’s breadth of work focuses around his lived experience as an Indigenous person growing up off-reservation, outside of his First Nations community in Canada. Using photography as a way to capture his home and share his experience on social media, Jared’s work has been featured by Instagram and other notable publications, propelling his following on the platform to over 32,000. In addition to his personal work, Jared has recently accepted a position as a storytelling fellow for Upstander Project, focusing on documenting the stories of other Indigenous people in the Dawnland. Jared’s goal as a creator is to increase Indigenous representation in education and media by advocating for inclusion and creating compelling narrative-driven work that drives discussion around important Indigenous issues. (↑Back to project)

**Patrick Marshall** is a filmmaker born in Waco, Texas in 1984. (↑Back to project)

**Adam Mazo** is Upstander Project co-founder and director, and co-director and producer on Untitled Margaret Moxa Film. He was in the same roles on the Emmy® award-winning feature-length film, Dawnland (Independent Lens, Woods Hole Jury Award for Best Documentary 2018), First Light (Camden International Film Festival 2016) and Dear Georgina (Buffalo International Film Festival Best Short 2020, Camden International Film Festival 2019) and the upcoming short Bounty. He is part of the producing team for the upcoming short film series, Reciprocity Project, co-produced with Nia Tero. He directed and produced Coexist (WORLD Channel, Africa Movie Academy Award Nominee 2014). Upstander Project films and learning resources illuminating hard history have reached millions of viewers including thousands of teachers and their students. He is originally from Minnesota, graduated from the University of Florida, and lives with his wife and sons in the territory of the Massachusett people, and the Wampanoag and Nipmuc Nations. (↑Back to project)

**Cat Mazza** - Born in 1977 Cat Mazza is a visual artist whose combination of craft and digital media explores the overlaps between textiles, technology and labor. Mazza has received fellowships from Creative Capital, the Now+There Accelerator, the Rockefeller Foundation and MacDowell Colony. Her animation Knit for Defense is in the Smithsonian American Art Museum collection. She will co-produce the film of her partner Jim Finn as she has most of his films for the last ten years. (↑Back to project)
**Jessie Motts** - She takes her coffee black, her whiskey neat, and her eggs over easy. J. Motts is a Cleveland-based filmmaker and writer with a mission to move people. After spending her undergraduate and graduate studies engrossed in a sizeable stack of books at Miami University of Ohio, Motts took her humanities background to Brooklyn and dove headfirst into New York's independent filmmaking community. Motts began her film producing career as a Line Producer on THIS TEACHER, winner of the 2018 LA Film Festival US Fiction Jury Prize, and she has since collaborated on projects supported by Ford Foundation, Chicken + Egg, and PBS. In addition to producing WE WANT TO NEGOTIATE, Motts is currently developing a slate of fiction and nonfiction projects in collaboration with Capital K Pictures, a production house founded by Emmy-nominated director/producer Sofian Khan. *(Back to project)*

**Riham Ezzaldeen**, co-producer, is a queer Syrian who shares inclusive stories alongside What Took You So Long. *(Back to project)*

**Virginie Tetoofa** is an indigenous Tahitian woman with 14 years of experience in filmmaking. After five years of working in the film sector of Europe, Virginie decided to return to her home island of Moorea to pursue her work as a film director and return to her roots. She believes that showing the contrast between the intangible elements of Polynesian heritage and the search for openness, can result in a new way of storytelling. Most of her work as a director focuses on the relation between tradition and modernity and on characters that are rooted in their land and culture. She uses a collaborative approach in her films which often feature the dilemma between preservation and progress. Some of her work includes: "Pari Pari Fenua" season 1 and 2 (short hybrid documentary series), music video "Faafaite" by Pepena and "E Airoi Vahine" (short narrative) which premiered at the Palm Springs Shortfest 2009 and was screened at numerous festivals (Montreal, FIPA, Tel Aviv). *(Back to project)*

####