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LEF Announces \$205,000 in Production and Post-Production Funding to New England-based Documentary Filmmakers

LEF and the Harvard Film Study Center have also jointly announced that Kathryn Ramey has been awarded the FSC-LEF Fellowship for 2020-21.

CAMBRIDGE, MA — The LEF Foundation has awarded **11 Moving Image Fund grants totaling \$205,000** in support of feature-length documentary works by New England-based filmmakers.

The **LEF Moving Image Fund** invests in feature-length documentary films that demonstrate excellence in technique, strong storytelling ability, and originality of artistic vision and voice. The most recent round of awards includes seven grants of \$15,000 to projects at the Production stage, and four grants of \$25,000 to projects at the Post-production stage.

LEF Executive Director Lyda Kuth shared these thoughts: **“As we face the unprecedented impact of COVID-19, LEF stands by its mission of supporting New England-based documentary directors and producers through the Moving Image Fund, while expanding recognition for their work locally and nationally.”**

She went on to state: **“It’s more important than ever to recognize the urgent and ongoing necessity of supporting artists, who critically re-interpret and re-imagine our world, and are essential voices in a democratic society.”**

At LEF’s January 2020 deadline for Production and Post-production, 65 letters of inquiry were received from filmmakers working across New England. Of these initial inquiries, 27 projects most aligned with LEF’s funding criteria were invited by LEF staff to submit a full application, including 19 finalists in Production and 8 finalists in Post-production. All full applications were evaluated by a panel of peer reviewers made up of filmmakers and professionals from across the U.S. who represent a range of perspectives on the documentary form. The panel remains anonymous, and changes every year. While LEF typically convenes each year’s Moving Image Fund panelists for an in-person review meeting each May, LEF altered its plans this year by convening an all-virtual panel review process for the first time in its history, while maintaining its original spring grant-making schedule.

LEF Program Officer Genevieve Carmel shared: **“While LEF’s private grant-making work on behalf of New England filmmakers is modest in scope, we hope that the Moving Image Fund grant program not only aids these filmmakers with direct project support to realize their visions, but highlights the importance of supporting independent voices in this unprecedented moment, which demands ingenuity and risk-taking.”**

Also in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, LEF announced in April that it would be expanding support for New England-based filmmakers at its upcoming June 5 deadline, by complementing its existing \$5,000 Pre-production grants with a new set of \$2,500 Early Development seed funding grants, for filmmakers at the earliest stages of research and development on a feature-length documentary who have not yet had a chance to shoot or edit any sample footage for their project, due to COVID-19.

The films awarded grants in this round take on a variety of artistic approaches – archival, collaborative, essayistic, observational, hybrid, and personal – and bring new perspectives to a range of subject matter.

About the most recent round of Production and Post-production grants awarded, Kuth wrote, **“As a funder, we’re in the privileged position of learning about the array of film projects being developed in the region and the filmmaking teams behind them. While not in the position to support all the projects submitted for consideration, we encourage filmmakers to continue to develop their work and to stay in touch with LEF as a resource for the filmmaking community.”**

Carmel added, **“As a small, regional funder, LEF has the ability to talk with individual filmmakers before and after they apply, and to share panel notes with them, in the spirit of providing feedback. As filmmakers, we know how isolating it can be to make a film, and that panel notes can join a chorus of other sources of feedback that a filmmaker receives.”**

Additionally, on May 21 LEF joined the Harvard Film Study Center in announcing that Kathryn Ramey has been selected as the 2020-21 recipient of the [Film Study Center-LEF Foundation Fellowship](#) with her project “El Signo Vacío (the empty sign)”. The FSC-LEF Fellowship, open to Boston-area nonfiction filmmakers who are not currently affiliated with Harvard, aims to foster connections between Harvard filmmakers and those in the surrounding filmmaker community. One filmmaker per academic year receives a \$10,000 grant (jointly funded by FSC and LEF Foundation), access to FSC production and post-production equipment, and the opportunity to participate in the Harvard FSC community through work-in-progress screenings, workshops, and other activities. Fellowship applications are accepted in the January round of the LEF Moving Image Fund Production and Post-production grant cycle and the final recipient of the FSC-LEF Fellowship is selected by the Film Study Center. [See the full announcement here.](#)

Spring 2020 LEF Moving Image Fund Grantees:

Production (\$15,000)



Black Barbershops and Salons: Neighborhood Oasis **Directed & Produced by Rudy Hypolite (Massachusetts)**

This film is an exploration of black barbershops and hair salons in the demographically changing Boston neighborhoods of Roxbury and Jamaica Plain and the suburban town of Stoughton, highlighting the shops' important role in their communities. We are introduced to the barbers, stylists and their patrons, capturing the humorous, serious and spirited discussions that take place in these multi-purpose establishments, which have served as an oasis in these communities over decades. Through a cinema verité filming approach with dual cameras in the five chosen shops, coupled with footage of key individuals' lives outside of the barbershops and salons, the film will delve into interpersonal relationships as well as broader social issues affecting the shops and their patrons. The climax of the film may develop from many potential scenarios or characters, such as the closing of one of the shops due to financial hardships encountered by the owners, staff or their customers, as a casualty of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

Previous LEF Support: Pre-production



Island of Lost Treasures

Directed by Ashley Sabin & David Redmon; Produced by Rebecca Tabasky (Massachusetts)

A modern-day cinephile-idiot, co-director David Redmon goes on a quest in New York City to rent a movie from Kim's Video, a video rental store with more than 55,000 movies. Upon arriving at 6 St Marks Place in the East Village, he is unable to locate his beloved Kim's Video and subsequently learns the entire collection was packed off to Sicily (Italy). David then sets off on a journey to rent a movie from Kim's Video in Sicily and, in so doing, becomes entangled in a stranger-than-fiction story when he enters the store in an effort to check up on the status of one of the most cherished and extensive movie collections in the world. *Previous LEF Support: None*



Tailings

Directed by Pedro de Filippis; Produced by Leonardo Mecchi, Tarsila Nakamura & Bronte Stahl (Rhode Island)

Two mining tailings dams break in Brazil, causing the country's worst-ever socio-environmental disasters. Moving between the state mining council who approves these and future mining projects and the experiences of tangentially and directly affected characters in the mining territories, *Tailings* leads us among notions of the industrial, the absurd, and the bureaucratic in search of something human. *Previous LEF Support: None*



The Call

Directed by Chico Colvard (Massachusetts); Produced by Madison O'Leary (Massachusetts)

THE CALL examines weaponized 911 calls in the age of white fragility. *Previous LEF Support: None*



The Cleaning Writer (working title)

Directed & Produced by Carolina Gonzalez Valencia (Maine)

Beatriz, a domestic worker in the U.S. and Carolina, her daughter-filmmaker, collaborate to create the fictional character, Bea – author of the forthcoming book “How to Migrate to the United States.” *The Cleaning Writer* is a hybrid documentary that tells a story about immigration, labor, dreams and the power of fiction to generate emancipation. *Previous LEF Support: None*



The Philadelphia Eleven

Directed & Produced by Margo Guernsey (Massachusetts); Co-Produced by Nikki Bramley (Massachusetts)

When eleven women defy church leadership and become the first women Episcopal priests, they have no idea they will become an international media phenomenon. They hit a chord in a deeply divided world about who speaks the word of God. Referred to by some as ‘badass’ and by others as ‘perverted’; they tell their story of becoming unexpected protagonists in a challenge to the patriarchy. *Previous LEF Support: Pre-production*



Untitled (Cairo, IL Project)

Directed by Lisa Malloy & J.P. Sniadecki; Produced by Wynne Hannan (Maine) and Karin Chien

Untitled (Cairo, IL Project) offers a cinematic and collectively-authored portrait of the maligned yet vital town of Cairo, IL, a former industrial and agricultural empire at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Through intimate depictions created in collaboration with an indelible cast of Cairoites, the film celebrates the town's vibrant community spirit and participates in its attempts at resurgence in defiance of economic hardship, racial injustice, and negative perceptions. *Previous LEF Support: Pre-production*

Post-Production (\$25,000)



Bound by Blood: Echoes of the Elaine Massacre

Directed by Franziska Blome (Massachusetts) and Llewellyn Smith; Produced by Llewellyn Smith, Franziska Blome and Annie Stopford.

History is not past, written in books – it’s alive, under our skin. *Bound by Blood* exhumes a largely unknown tragedy that occurred in the Arkansas Delta during the Red Summer of 1919 - a brutal massacre of black sharecroppers by white posses and federal troops. Through the story of one family and one community, this film explores how to reckon with the past, when 100 years later, economic, social and psychological reverberations still linger. *Previous LEF Support: Pre-production, Production*



El Signo Vacío (the empty sign)

Directed by Kathryn Ramey (Massachusetts)

Using educational, touristic and military media/artifacts from the United States alongside contemporary voices, images and sounds from Puerto Rico, EL SIGNO VACÍO (the empty sign) is a feature length cinematic essay interrogating the 120-year US occupation of Puerto Rico to reveal how US democratic narratives effectively obscure its role as a colonial power in the region. EL SIGNO VACÍO is a re-educational film asking ME/the US viewer to reconsider their role in geopolitics. *Previous LEF Support: Pre-production, Production*



No One Told Me

Directed & Produced by Zulilah Merry (Maine)

A cinéma vérité-style documentary, No One Told Me provides a rare look at the postpartum period, an experience shared by women worldwide but rarely captured in documentary film. This radically intimate work follows Elise and Marc during the first six weeks of parenthood. Focusing on the new mother, it shares her profound identity shift and the significant physical, hormonal and psychological changes she faces after giving birth. *Previous LEF Support: Pre-production*



The Order of Things

Directed by Jeff Silva & Ramona Badescu; Produced by Allison Cekala (Massachusetts) & Victor Ede

THE ORDER OF THINGS illuminates traces of an unspoken traumatic past through the daily rhythms and memories of Alexandru, a 90-year-old watchmaker and survivor of the political internment camps of Romania's dictatorship, in which more than 2 million people were killed or persecuted between 1945-1989. A film about contemplation, routine, resilience and the echoes of time. *Previous LEF Support: Production*

In addition to this group of grantees, LEF also awarded \$30,000 to 6 projects in Pre-production earlier in the fiscal year. **In total, LEF will be distributing \$235,000 in funding to documentary productions over the course of its 2020 fiscal year.**

The next grant deadline is **Friday, June 5, 2020** for projects seeking Pre-production and Early Development support. 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 Gen Carmel at gen@lef-foundation.org

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