



BERKELEY
FILM FOUNDATION
IMPACT REPORT
2020 - 2023

Richmond

Alameda

Albany

Berkeley

Emeryville

Oakland

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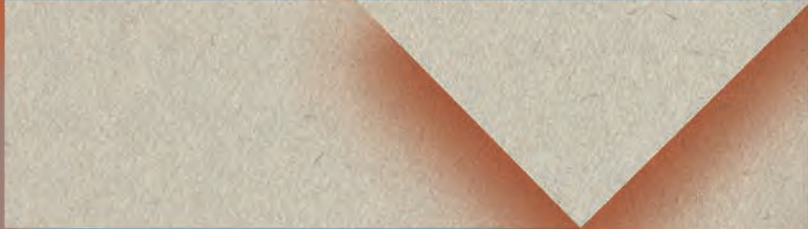
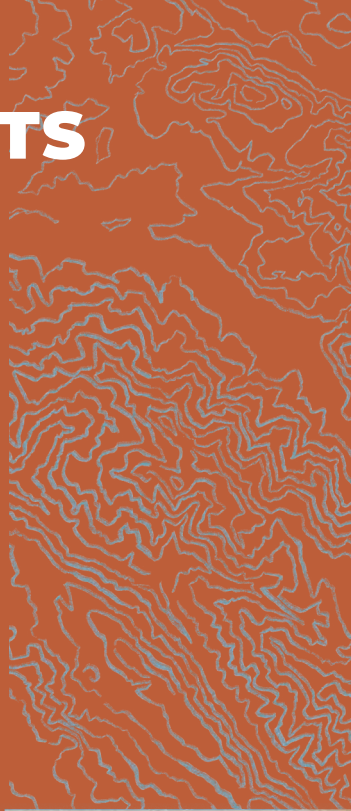
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Dear **FRIENDS and SUPPORTERS:**

It is our pleasure to release the Berkeley FILM Foundation's Impact Report for 2020-2023. Thanks to the generosity of individuals, corporate partners, organizations and city governments that are dedicated to funding the arts, the Berkeley FILM Foundation has been able to support films that force us to expand our minds, examine hard truths and push for systemic change. In this report, we will show you a selection of projects that we are most excited about and why.

This has been a tumultuous period for artists, to say the least. But the resilience and creativity of East-Bay filmmakers has been truly remarkable. Despite the seismic shift that the pandemic brought, the Berkeley FILM Foundation received a record number of submissions and completed four successful grant cycles, in which we funded a total of 72 unique projects, held 18 screenings in Oakland and hosted six educational workshops.

All of us at BFF have been thrilled to watch so many members of our film community enjoy notable successes over the past few years. To name a few: Erika Cohn won a 2021 Emmy Award for Outstanding Current Affairs Documentary for *BELLY OF THE BEAST*, Reid Davenport's *I DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE* won the Best Director Award at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival, and we watched with adoration as Jim LeBrecht, Nicole Newnham and Sara Bolder attended the Academy Awards as nominees for Best Documentary for their groundbreaking work, *CRIP CAMP* in 2021.

Many have described to me the thrill of filmmaking and all that comes with it: the endless hustle, the sting of disappointments and the elation of the successes. This is why I have been heartened to see city, county and state governments providing emergency funds for artists throughout this time of uncertainty. In California, these funds are still being rolled out. My hope is this will endure and transform into consistent, sustained investment in artists because art is essential for cultural exchange, education, community building and expression.

As we welcome a new year, I eagerly await the discovery of more galvanizing projects by East Bay filmmakers that will inspire, educate and challenge our world.

Warmly,

Isabella Miller
Program Director



MISSION

The Berkeley FILM Foundation is a 501(c)(3) grant and educational program for independent filmmakers founded by the City of Berkeley, Wareham Development, and the Saul Zaentz Company with a mission to nurture, sustain and preserve the thriving film community while attracting the next generation of filmmakers.





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The Berkeley FILM Foundation would not exist without the vision and stalwart efforts of colleagues Saul Zaentz and Al Bendich. With the support of Rich Robbins, Saul and Al founded the Berkeley FILM Foundation to help support local, independent artists – a community that Saul mentored throughout his career and built a space in Berkeley for creatives to work and collaborate. The Saul Zaentz Company remains a major contributor to the Berkeley FILM Foundation.

Saul Zaentz built the largest independent Jazz record label in the world, Fantasy Records, which brought such bands such as Creedence Clearwater Revival and comedian Lenny Bruce to the world. Later, he created the Saul Zaentz Company and became a prominent independent film producer whose projects garnered 34 Academy Award nominations and 22 wins, including three for “Best Picture”. His major works included One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Amadeus, The English Patient, The Unbearable Lightness of Being and The Mosquito Coast. We are proud that his legacy as an educator, mentor and film visionary can continue with the Berkeley FILM Foundation’s annual Saul Zaentz Award for \$25,000.

Al Bendich was a civil rights attorney who became co-president and legal counsel for the Saul Zaentz Company. He was a highly respected lawyer who successfully defended several freedom of speech cases at the Supreme Court which set an important standard for artistic freedom of expression that is adhered to today. As an ACLU staff lawyer, Al is famous for defending Lawrence Ferlinghetti against obscenity charges for publishing Allen Ginsberg’s book “Howl and other Poems.” He also successfully defended comic Lenny Bruce against obscenity charges in San Francisco in 1962. The Berkeley FILM Foundation bestows an annual Al Bendich Award for \$20,000 in honor of Al’s remarkable contributions to civil and human rights.

*Two of
Our
Founders*



EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The Berkeley FILM Foundation is committed to amplifying voices of underrepresented communities by funding films that tell their stories. We strive to support these filmmakers and be a model for the larger East Bay arts establishment. BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and disabled filmmakers have been a driving force in the Berkeley/East Bay film community for decades and it is our job to strengthen their impact in perpetuity and in concert with the larger documentary community.

Since 2009,

- **265** unique projects have been **funded**,
- **\$2.59M** has been **awarded**,
- **102** films were by **filmmakers of color**, representing 37% of our total projects funded, and
- **59%** of funded films were directed by **women**.
- **71** **student projects** from local universities have been funded.



Between

2020-2023

- 80 funded projects
- 18 screenings
- 6 educational workshops

60% of the grant recipient directors identified as **BIPOC** in the 2020 grant cycle.

BERKELEY

FILM Foundation



FOUNDERS

WAREHAM
DEVELOPMENT



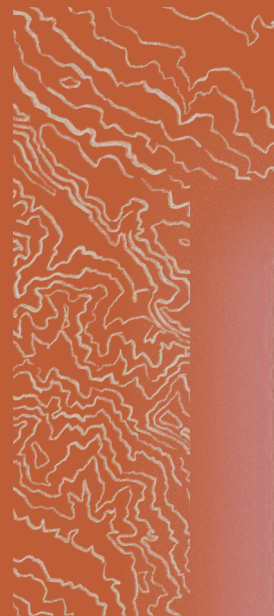
The Saul Zaentz Company

Thank you

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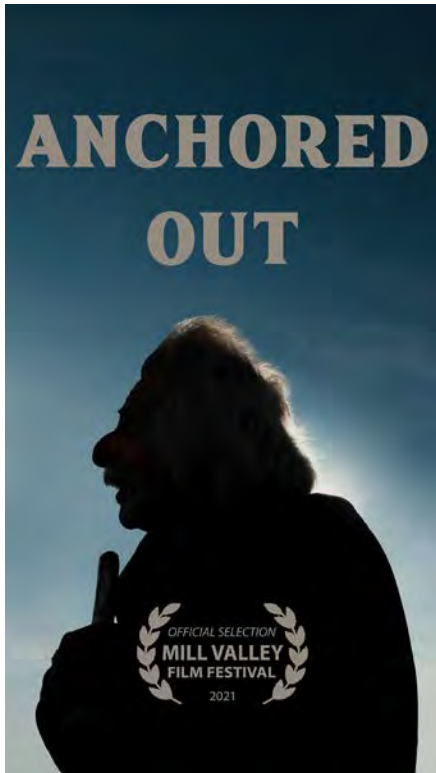
Saul Zaentz Charitable Foundation

The Berkeley FILM Foundation is thrilled to be receiving programming support from the Saul Zaentz Charitable Foundation who exist to build on the legacy of three-time Best Picture winner Saul Zaentz's celebrated career as an independent media entrepreneur. True to Zaentz's vision, the Foundation is dedicated to advancing programs that aid the most vulnerable in the U.S. We thank them for their incredible generosity!

STUDENT GRANTS

Since 2009, BFF has supported 71 student films totaling over \$227,000. These students are enrolled in film programs around the Bay Area, including UC Berkeley, SF State and Berkeley Community College.

Here are some student films that have gone on to be featured by national publications:



ANCHORED OUT by Katie Bernstein and Clara Mokri was featured by The New Yorker with an accompanying article. The team were grantees from 2021.



The New York Times picked up **8 DAYS AT WARE** and its accompanying exposé written by Meg Schutzer and Rachel Lauren Mueller. The film received a grant in 2020.



WASHED ASHORE by Cameron Nielsen – A documentary short funded in 2022 and published by the Los Angeles Times.

THE LONG RESCUE

2022 Jonathan Logan Family Foundation Elevate Award

Grant: \$25,000

Stage: Production

Director/Producer: **Jennifer Huang**

Location: *Oakland*

THE LONG RESCUE follows Filipina teen sex trafficking survivors for six years for a film that focuses on recovery rather than trauma, survivors rather than rescuers, and elucidates the perpetuation of poverty, violence, and shame. Each girl's story is told through four acts and we learn of their dark pasts through brief flashbacks where we come to understand the cyclical nature of exploitation that haunts women and their children for generations. These girls reveal the lifelong nature of recovery, centering the messy, lived experiences of survivors. Can they overcome intergenerational violence and learn to truly thrive?

THE LONG RESCUE is currently in production and the project has been accepted into the 2022 Doc NYC Storytelling Incubator, an initiative that connects emerging filmmakers with underrepresented perspectives to established industry figures who provide hands-on creative consultation and professional guidance.





I DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE

2021 Saul Zaentz Award

Grant: \$25,000

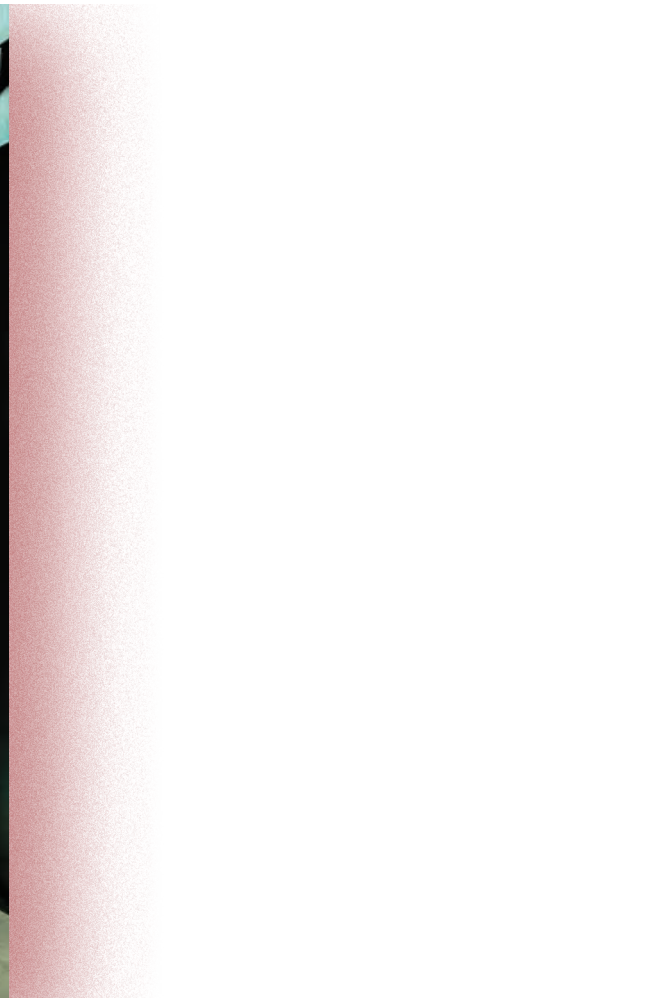
Stage: Post-Production

Director: **Reid Davenport**

Location: *Oakland*

Spurred by the spectacle of a circus tent that goes up outside his Oakland apartment, a disabled filmmaker launches into an unflinching meditation on freakdom, (in)visibility, and the pursuit of individual agency. Shot entirely from his literal physical perspective, both from his wheelchair and his two feet, the filmmaker's gaze and thoughts oscillate between how he is seen, his distant family, and whether his films have fallen into the legacy of the Freak Show.

I DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE is in distribution and was the winner of the Directing Award for U.S. Documentary at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival, the Grand Jury Award at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, and the McBaine Bay Area Documentary Feature Award at the SFFILM Festival 2022. The film will air on Season 35 of POV on January 16th, 2023.



SKIN OF GLASS

2022 AI Bendich Award
Grant: \$20,000
Stage: Post-Production

Director: **Denise Zmekhol**

Location: *Berkeley*

SKIN OF GLASS is the story of São Paulo's tallest high-rise favela [slum], a 24-story office tower that is a treasure of mid-20th century architecture, and my late father's masterpiece. The film follows the filmmakers' journey to discover her father's threatened legacy as an artist, as I confront the harsh reality of inequality destroying the city he loved.

SKIN OF GLASS made its World Premiere at the 2023 Mill Valley Film Festival. The film has been supported by BAVC Media, IDA, The Gotham and the Fleishhacker Foundation and received the 2022 award from ITVS Diversity Development Fund.

ON THE DIVIDE

2021 Award

Grant: \$12,000

Stage: Post-Production

Director: **Maya Cueva**

Location: *Berkeley*

ON THE DIVIDE follows the story of three Latinx people living in McAllen, Texas who, despite their views, are connected by the most unexpected of places: the last reproductive health clinic on the U.S./Mexico border. As threats to the clinic and their personal safety mount, our three characters are forced to make decisions they never could have imagined.

ON THE DIVIDE is currently in distribution. It was partially funded by Latino Public Broadcasting which led to its national broadcast on POV. The film had its premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival, won Best Documentary at the San Francisco International Film Festival and received the Jury Award at the 2021 New Orleans Film Festival.



TRACKER

2023 Saul Zaentz Award

Grant: \$25,000

Stage: Post-Production

Director: **Courtney Quirin**

Location: *Oakland*

Students at a premier wildlife tracking program in South Africa unearth the roots of their shared humanity and discover their personal power through learning the language of nature.

The film starts on Day 1 of training at Tracker Academy and follows the transformation of eight students over a year as they cultivate the tracker mindset and learn to read the language of nature. By training the next generation of trackers, Tracker Academy aims to create an industry standard for tracking as a scientific and professional pursuit, and integrate these ancient skills into modern conservation.

The film is nearing the end of production and has obtained fiscal sponsorship from the Center for Independent Documentary. Net proceeds of the film will sponsor a future Tracker Academy student.





OAKLEAD

2020 Jonathan Logan Family Foundation Elevate Award

Grant: \$25,000

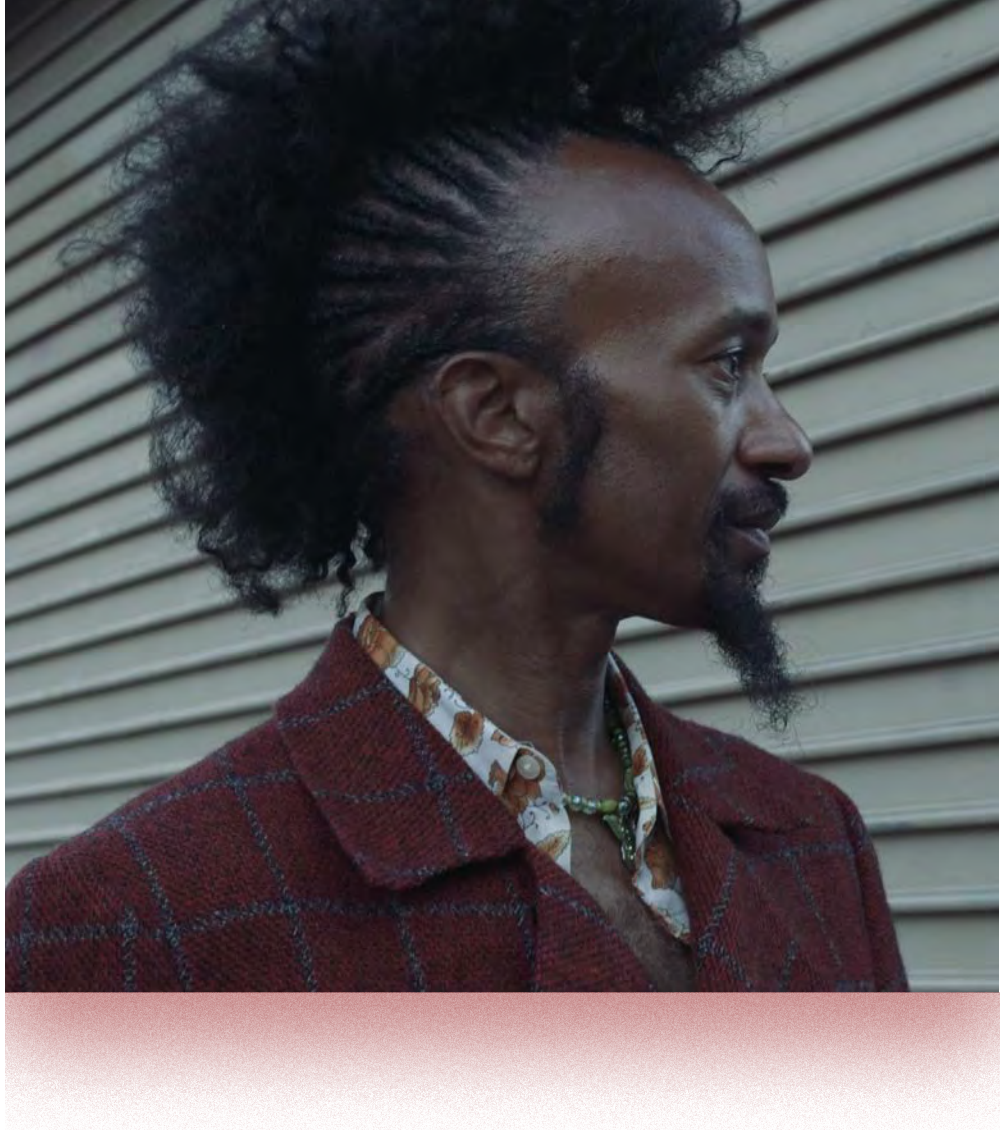
Stage: Production

Director: **Alex Bledsoe**

Location: *Oakland*

In Oakland, California, where lead poisoning rates are higher than Flint, Michigan, families fight to protect their children from their own homes and schools—confronting over a century of environmental racism. This forthcoming documentary explores the history of lead poisoning in Oakland, investigating the correlation between socioeconomic status and access to equitable housing and healthcare. The film highlights the history of deindustrialization and “legacy lead,” contaminated water, methods of exposure, stories of affected families, and efforts to eradicate contamination.

OAKLEAD is currently in production and in October 2022 was selected to participate in the Sundance Documentary Film Program. The project is fiscally sponsored by The Redford Center and is currently hiring an editor in preparation for post-production.



FANTASTIC NEGRITO: HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND YET?

2020 Award
Grant: \$12,000

Director: **Francisco Núñez Capriles and Yvan Iturriaga**

Location: *Berkeley*

Xavier Dphrepaulezz is a 51-year-old survivor living his “third rebirth” as Fantastic Negrito, a two-time Grammy winning blues artist making an album about the mental health crisis devastating his family and community in Oakland, CA. **HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND YET?** follows his creative process, unraveling his personal journey and that of his loved ones as he searches for truth, reconciliation, and ultimately, healing.

FANTASTIC NEGRITO: HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND YET? is in distribution and premiered at the 2022 Mill Valley Film Festival to a sold-out audience at BAMPFA. It is now submitting to top-tier film festivals around the world.

SANSÓN AND ME

Saul Zaentz Award 2019
Grant: \$12,000

Award 2022
Grant: \$5,000

Director: **Rodrigo Reyes**

Location: *Berkeley*

As a Spanish Interpreter in rural California, director Rodrigo Reyes met Sansón, an undocumented Mexican immigrant who was sentenced to life in prison without parole. With no permission to interview him, Sansón and Rodrigo corresponded for over a decade and used his letters as inspiration for recreations of his childhood. The result is a cinematic odyssey navigating immigration and the depths of the criminal justice system, pushing the boundaries of the imagination to rescue Sansón's story from oblivion.

SANSÓN AND ME is currently in distribution and had its World Premiere at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival. The film won the 2022 Sheffield Doc/Fest-Best Film Award and has received funding from ITVS as part of their VOCES, Independent Lens series and will premiere on public television in September 2023.



AMERICAN JUSTICE ON TRIAL: PEOPLE VS. NEWTON

2017 Production Grant

Al Bendich Award

Grant: \$20,000

Co-Director/Producer: **Andrew Abrahams**

Co-Director: **Herb Ferette**

Adapted from a book of the same name, this short film tells the forgotten story of one of the “trials of the century.” With startling relevance to today, Black Panther leader Huey P. Newton faced the death penalty for killing a white policeman in a pre-dawn car stop in 1967 Oakland. While Newton and his maverick attorneys boldly indicted racism in the courts and the country, and a groundbreaking jury led by a historic Black foreman deliberated Newton’s fate, the streets of Oakland and the nation were set to explode if the jury, as expected, returned a verdict of murder.

AMERICAN JUSTICE ON TRIAL: PEOPLE VS. NEWTON is in distribution and premiered at the 2022 San Francisco International Film Festival. It has received recognition as the winner of Best Documentary at the Athens International Monthly Film Festival and winner of Outstanding Achievement from Cult Critic Movies Awards. The film was shortlisted for the 2023 Oscars in the Short Documentary category.



\$1,000,000 MATCH

The Berkeley FILM Foundation is working towards a generous \$1 million challenge grant. This extraordinary gift will allow us to substantially increase our funding pool, build on our existing programming, and sustain our ongoing operations.

Help us bring more East-Bay talents to the world by making a contribution today. We are not only advancing the careers of outstanding talent but also attracting and cultivating the next generation of storytellers.

Any amount you give will be matched dollar for dollar:

