

# NewFilmmakers LA and WarnerMedia’s OneFifty Announce First NewNarratives Grant Winners

With partners like NewFilmmakers LA, OneFifty aims to introduce emerging talent to WarnerMedia’ distribution pipelines. Here’s what’s behind their latest collaboration.



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The 2021 NFMLA NewNarratives grant recipients.

NFMLA

**Update, November 23:** NewFilmmakers Los Angeles has announced the recipient of its inaugural NewNarratives grant, a program supported by WarnerMedia’s OneFifty division created to support and develop emerging global storytellers. Filmmaker Jim Vendiola will receive \$40,000 for the development of his feature “Argus,” about a disaffected private eye who is hired to reinvestigate the case of a missing teen long thought to have run away. It shifts points of view between the detective, an obsessive killer, and the pre-abduction life of the victim and is described by NFMLA as a “subversive, BIPOC, female-driven reimagining of 1970s Neo-noirs.”

The Chicago-based Vendiola, a first-generation Filipino-American, is a writer, director, and development exec who has thrice been a Newcity FILM 50 honoree. He’s also a NFMLA alum

“I’m truly ecstatic and grateful to NFMLA and OneFifty for this incredible opportunity. For years I’ve taken meaningful risks with the form and content of my work, which has been a double-edged sword of maintaining my artistic integrity while being largely ignored by the usual gatekeepers, for telling stories that do not offer tidy conclusions nor lend to homogenous franchises bled of freshness and nuance. I can’t wait to bring this project to audiences hungry for something different, with the support of this amazing program,” Vendiola said.

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NFMLA put out a worldwide call for submissions in July and received over 200 entries from over 40 countries. The program aimed to select one winner for a grant of between \$10,000 and \$100,000, but organizers said the quality of submissions prompted them to award three additional grants. In addition, the winners will also be introduced by OneFifty to WarnerMedia executives for further development consideration.

Nora Mariana Salim and Rami Kodeih will receive up to \$50,000 toward the development of a to-be-announced project.

Salim is a Los Angeles-based writer who recently worked on the Peacock miniseries “Angelyne” and was a 2020 Fellow at the Jewish Film Institute. She and Kodeih are both writers for Apple TV+’s “Little America” and are working on an original series with Participant Media. Kodeih’s most recent work, the Alia Shawkat-starring short “Alina,” won Best Short Film, Drama Award at the Best of NFMLA Awards.

Gabriela Ortega will receive \$5,000 toward the development of her narrative feature “Huella,” which follows a restless flamenco dancer resigned to a call-center job, who, after his grandmother dies, breaks a family ritual that unleashes a generational curse.

Ortega is a Dominican Republic native based in LA, who was selected to be part of Lena Waithe’s Rising Voices initiative, where she produced a short version of “Huella,” which premiered at Sundance. Her film “Papi” was nominated for a 2021 Best of NFMLA Award and is set to premiere on HBO next year. She has a half-hour dramedy in development with Wilmer Valderama’s WV Entertainment, is a staff writer for the “Bioshock 4” game franchise, and Season 2 of Netflix’s “Go Off.”

Set Hernandez Rongkilyo will receive \$5,000 toward the development of their feature documentary “Unseen,” which follows an aspiring social worker who is blind and undocumented. The audio-based film reimagines the accessibility of cinema while exploring the intersections of immigration, disability, and mental health.

Hernandez, who is non-binary and an undocumented immigrant, saw their 2019 short doc “Cover/Age” nominated for a 2021 Social Impact Media Awards. They are the co-founder of the Undocumented Filmmakers Collective, which advances equity for undocumented immigrants in the media industry.

“We’re very proud of the four selected projects and the filmmakers whose visions these funds will support. The greatest challenge of this competition was choosing from the overwhelming number of strong, unique and exciting proposals that we received. It was an absolute pleasure to work with our screeners on this project, entertainment journalist and member of the LA Film Critics Association, Carlos Aguilar and film curator, producer and programmer at Cleveland International Film Festival and Atlanta Film Festival, Ivonne Cotorruelo. Their keen eyes and thoughtful input were instrumental in identifying our finalists,” NFMLA Programming Director Bojana Sandic and co-founder/Executive Director Larry Laboe said in a statement.

Over half of the NewNarratives applicants were women and over a third were LGBTQ+. Around a third were white, 28 percent were Latino, 20 percent were Black, 13 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, 6 percent were indigenous/native, and 5 percent were Middle Eastern.