



AWARDS

Chicago filmmaker Jim Vendiola awarded NewNarratives inaugural grant

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NewFilmmakers Los Angeles (NFMLA), supported by WarnerMedia OneFifty, has announced the final selection of its NewNarratives artist grant program. Chicago filmmaker **Jim Vendiola** has been awarded the NewNarratives inaugural grant for 2021.

The program is committed to identifying one winner who would be awarded a grant ranging between \$10,000 and \$100,000, to be determined based on need. The initiative kicked off on June 19, 2021 with a worldwide call for submissions and received over 200 entries ranging from feature narrative, documentary, and animated works as well as scripted and unscripted series. The proposed projects included productions and artists from over 40 countries and 6 continents.

The submissions represented a diverse applicant pool including 53% female, 34% LGBTQ+ and 4% non-binary. Ethnic diversity consisted of 33% Caucasian, 28% Latinx/Hispanic, 20% Black, 13% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6% Indigenous/Native, 5% Middle Eastern. In addition, 7% of applications were submitted by people with disabilities, and 3% of applicants are military veterans.



Jim Vendiola

The NewNarratives inaugural grant for 2021 has been set at \$40,000 and will be awarded to Chicago filmmaker **Jim Vendiola** for the development of his latest narrative feature film ARGUS, the story of a disaffected private eye who is hired to reinvestigate the case of a missing teen long thought to have run away. Shifting POVs between the detective, an obsessive killer, and the pre-abduction life of the victim in question, ARGUS is a subversive, BIPOC, female-driven reimagining of 1970s neo-noirs.

“We are thrilled to collaborate with NewFilmmakers LA on this exciting and powerful slate of films. Each project truly captures the powerful, unique, and bold vision from these talented creative teams led by innovative filmmakers, perfectly juxtaposing art, science and culture—which exemplifies what OneFifty is all about,” **says Axel Caballero, Head of WarnerMedia OneFifty & Vice President, Artistic and Cultural Innovations.**

Vendiola is a Chicago-based writer/director and development exec whose work frequently explores ideas of heartache, longing, liminality, eros and pathos. A three-time Newcity FILM 50 honoree, 3Arts “Make a Wave” grantee, NFMLA alum and Best of NFMLA Awards Nominee, he gravitates towards characters and scenarios that subvert genre conventions, tropes, and the gaze historically defined by cis het men and exclusionary models of masculinity. As a Filipino-American with immigrant parents, his work also ponders themes of identity, otherness and alienation.

“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,” **says Jim Vendiola.**

As a result of the incredibly high quality of submissions and challenge in selecting only one artist, NewNarratives will make three additional grant awards as follows:



Rami Kodeih

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

Salim is an LA-based writer who studied English Literature at Stanford University. Recently, she worked on the Peacock miniseries ANGELYNE, produced by Sam Esmail, and was a 2020 Fellow at the Jewish Film Institute.

Kodeih is an LA-based writer/director who first fell in love with movies as a child of war visiting a local VHS-stocked bodega. He has since written and directed award-winning narrative shorts and feature documentaries that have screened at the Director’s Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival, Clermont-Ferrand and BFI, among others. His

most recent work, ALINA starring Alia Shawkat, won the Best Short Film, Drama Award at the Best of NFMLA Awards and screened at 250 festivals worldwide.

Kodeih and Salim are both writers for Apple TV’s LITTLE AMERICA, which explores the lives of immigrants in the US, and are working on an original series with Participant Media, inspired by Kodeih’s own experiences as an immigrant and displaced child of war. They are alumni of the Sundance Feature Film Program and Berlinale Talents and focus on elevated, dynamic genre stories that explore social themes related to gender, class and immigration.

“We are deeply honored to be recognized by NFMLA and OneFifty and to be given the opportunity to start bringing our next story to life. It means so much to be a part of an incredible program that helps lift essential, underrepresented voices to the forefront,” say Nora Mariana Salim and Rami Kodeih.



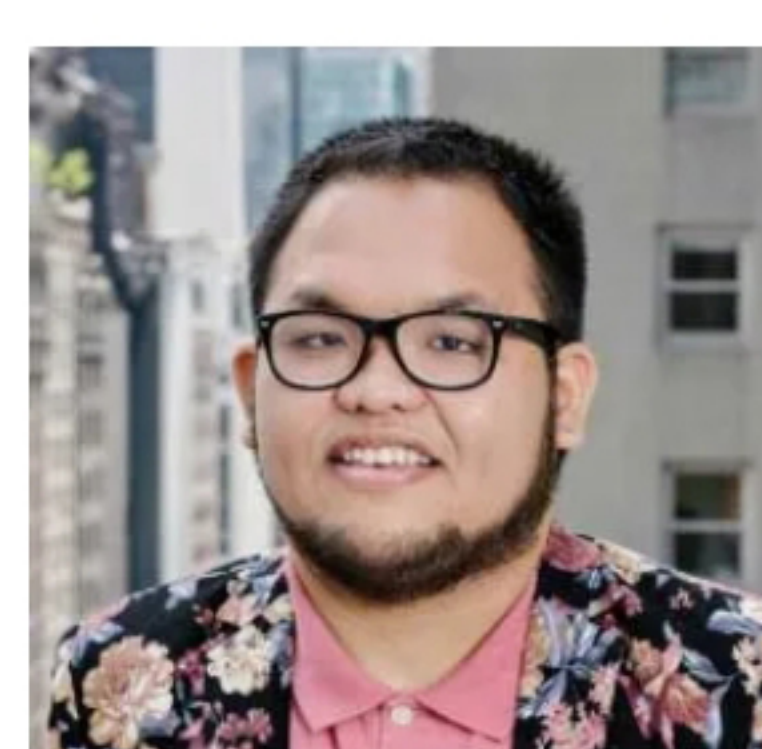
Gabriela Ortega

Gabriela Ortega – \$5,000 toward the development of the narrative feature film HUELLA.

Ortega is an award-winning writer/director from the Dominican Republic. She is a USC alum based in LA. In 2021, Ortega was selected to be a part of the Lena Waithe created “Rising Voices” initiative. Through the program, she produced her short film HUELLA, which premiered at Tribeca and is currently on its festival run. She has won awards at Sundance Ignite, NFFTY, LALIFF and is a Sundance Lab, NFMLA, NALIP Latino Media Market, HBO Tomorrow’s Filmmakers Today and IAMA under30 lab alum. Her film PAPI was nominated for a 2021 Best of NFMLA Award and is set to premiere on HBO in 2022.

Ortega has been hired to write a feature film for Sony Pictures International, has a half-hour dramedy in development with Wilmer Valderama’s WV Entertainment and is also a staff writer for the much anticipated Bioschock 4 game franchise and Season 2 of Netflix’s GO OFF with Jess and Julissa.

HUELLA follows Daniela Garcia, a restless flamenco dancer resigned to a desk job at a call center and constantly running away from her past is preparing for a life-changing audition. However, when she receives the unexpected news that her grandmother has died, she breaks a family ritual that unleashes a generational curse she’ll have to reckon with.



Set Hernandez Rongkilyo

Set Hernandez Rongkilyo – \$5,000 toward the development of the documentary feature film UNSEEN.

As a queer, non-binary, undocumented immigrant, Hernandez dedicates their filmmaking to expand the portrayal of their community on screen. Their recent short documentary “COVER/AGE” (2019), about healthcare expansion for undocumented adults, was named a 2021 Social Impact Media Awards Finalist. Hernandez served as Impact Producer for projects such as “IN PLAIN SIGHT” (2020) and the award-winning “CALL HER GANDA” (Tribeca, 2018) by PJ Raval. Hernandez is the co-founder of the Undocumented Filmmakers Collective which

advances equity for undocumented immigrants in the media industry. Hernandez has been supported by the Sundance Institute, among others and is a member of NFMLA.

UNSEEN is a multi-platform documentary that follows the story of Pedro, an aspiring social worker who happens to be a blind, undocumented immigrant. Through Pedro’s personal journey, this “audio-based” film reimagines the accessibility of cinema, while exploring the systemic intersections of immigration, disability, and mental health.

“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 Aguila 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,” **say NFMLA Programming Director, Bojana Sandic and NFMLA Co-Founder/Executive Director, Larry Laboe.**