



CULTURE

WAR





A small Liberal Arts College in Sarasota, FL finds itself in a **culture war** against the government of Florida for the basic right of **educational freedom**. Now, the community must learn how to find **resistance** in the midst of a reality they didn't sign up for.

On January 6th, 2023, Governor Ron DeSantis wages a war against "wokeness" and appoints six new members to New College of Florida's Board of Trustees, marking a shift in leadership at the small, progressive public school and flipping its world upside down for the college's community.

The consequences of the appointment are immediate, with the firing of the now former president, Patricia Okker, the abolishment of the diversity and inclusion office, the end of the gender studies major, the recruitment of student-athletes, and the diaspora of dozens of faculty members.

This case has gotten national and international attention. Governor DeSantis, at the time in the race to be the Republican representative in the next presidential election, has made himself directly attached to the events happening at this small liberal arts institution.

New College's situation represents the endless opportunities for government control of public educational institutions and the many impacts on the local community.

OVERVIEW

GENRE
DOCUMENTARY

PROJECT TYPE
SHORT, STUDENT

RUNTIME
27 MINUTES

COMPLETION DATE
JULY 2024

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
UNITED STATES

LANGUAGE
ENGLISH

SUBTITLES
ENGLISH

SHOOTING FORMAT
DIGITAL, SUPER 8

ASPECT RATIO
2.39:1

WRITER & DIRECTOR
CELI MITIDIERI

PRODUCER
CELI MITIDIERI

PRODUCER
MILENA MONTERO

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
ALEJANDRA CINTRÓN RIVERA

PRODUCTION DESIGNER
CARLY JONES

EDITOR
MATTHEW PETERSON

SOUND DESIGNER
NICHOLAS HORNE

COMPOSER
KATYA RICHARDSON

SOCIALS
[LINKTR.EE/CULTUREWARFILMS](https://linktr.ee/culturewarfilms)



MILENA

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#) | [LINKEDIN](#)

Milena Montero is an Argentine producer and filmmaker based in Los Angeles. She is drawn to stories that spark dialogue and inspire social impact, with experience spanning documentaries, television, films, and branded content. Her work has screened at more than 20 film festivals worldwide and earned recognition, including Telly Awards, ADDY Awards, and a Student Emmy nomination.

Born and raised in Buenos Aires, Milena later studied in China before moving to the United States to pursue filmmaking. A graduate of Ringling College of Art and Design with a BFA in Film and Branded Entertainment, she approaches storytelling with a global perspective and a curiosity for underrepresented voices.

Currently, she works as a freelance producer across documentary and narrative projects, collaborating with filmmakers and brands committed to meaningful, purpose-driven storytelling.



Milena Montero
Producer

Celi Mitidieri
Director & Producer

CELI

[WEBSITE](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#) | [LINKEDIN](#)

Celi Mitidieri is a Brazilian documentary filmmaker and photographer based in Los Angeles. With a passion for stories that create a lasting community impact, her work uses the power of documentary photography and filmmaking to spark reflection and inspire social change.

A recent graduate of Ringling College of Art and Design, Celi earned a BFA in Film with minors in Business of Art and Design, Photography and Imaging, Creative Writing, and Film Studies.

Currently, Celi works as a freelancer in documentary production, directing, and cinematography, partnering with brands that aim to illuminate untold stories, celebrating resilience and human connection in an ever-changing world.

The project began on January 6th, 2023, as an inevitable response to Governor Ron DeSantis' appointment of six conservative leaders to NCF's Board of Trustees, marking a shift in leadership at the small, progressive public school.

As a student at Ringling College of Art and Design, a partner college nearby, I have been connected with the NCF community since my first year. The schools' partnership allows students to take classes on both campuses without additional cost, fostering cooperation and collaboration.

Upon hearing the news of the appointments, I was horrified and immediately began documenting the situation through photography. As events escalated, the project evolved into my Senior thesis, a short documentary focusing on the students' perspectives. My personal relationships with many students, coupled with my status as a registered student at NCF during my last semester, allowed me to be present on campus and build friendships based on mutual trust and respect. This approach offers the audience an intimate and passionate view of the significant changes affecting their lives in such a short period.

Since the new trustees took over, the College has seen its president fired, the diversity and inclusion center abolished, the gender studies program dissolved, and student activists prosecuted. This film explores these struggles, crafting a portrait of today's political climate and its direct impact on students in higher education.

After wrapping production in Sarasota, I traveled to Massachusetts to meet Libby Harrity, one of the student activists forced to leave NCF. This experience provided deeper insights into the challenges faced by those who felt they had no choice but to leave Florida.

Culture War aims to raise awareness about the fight for educational freedom in Florida and across the United States. Please reach out if you would like to join our fight!

Thank you for taking the time to learn about our film,

celi*mitidieri



GABY

Gaby Batista is a Senior in Anthropology, the editor in chief of New College's student run newspaper, the Catalyst, and a community organizer.

They have taken several leadership roles, with experiences that range from student ambassador to speaker at Save New College rallies.





LIBBY

Libby Harrity, former Senate President at NCF, was forced to leave New College after being the target of several accusations of “student conduct violations” for their activist efforts in protests against the new policies and the Board of Trustees.

Now, Libby lives in Massachusetts at the Hampshire College campus, where over 60 students - 10% of the non-graduating student body of NCF in 2023 - have relocated to continue pursuing their education.





GRACE

Grace Keenan represents her community as the President of the New College Student Alliance, the student governing body at NCF.

Chosen as the student commencement speaker for the 2024 graduating class, Grace has an incredible track record of holding a diplomatic posture while leading with a firm voice and strong opinions.





AMY
Faculty Representative on the Board of Trustees,
Director of the Gender Studies Program



CHLOE
4th Year Student,
Student Journalist



CHAI
4th Year Student,
Student activist



JONO
President of NCF Freedom
Alumn & Former Professor



ISAAC
Alumn,
Former Editor in Chief of the student newspaper

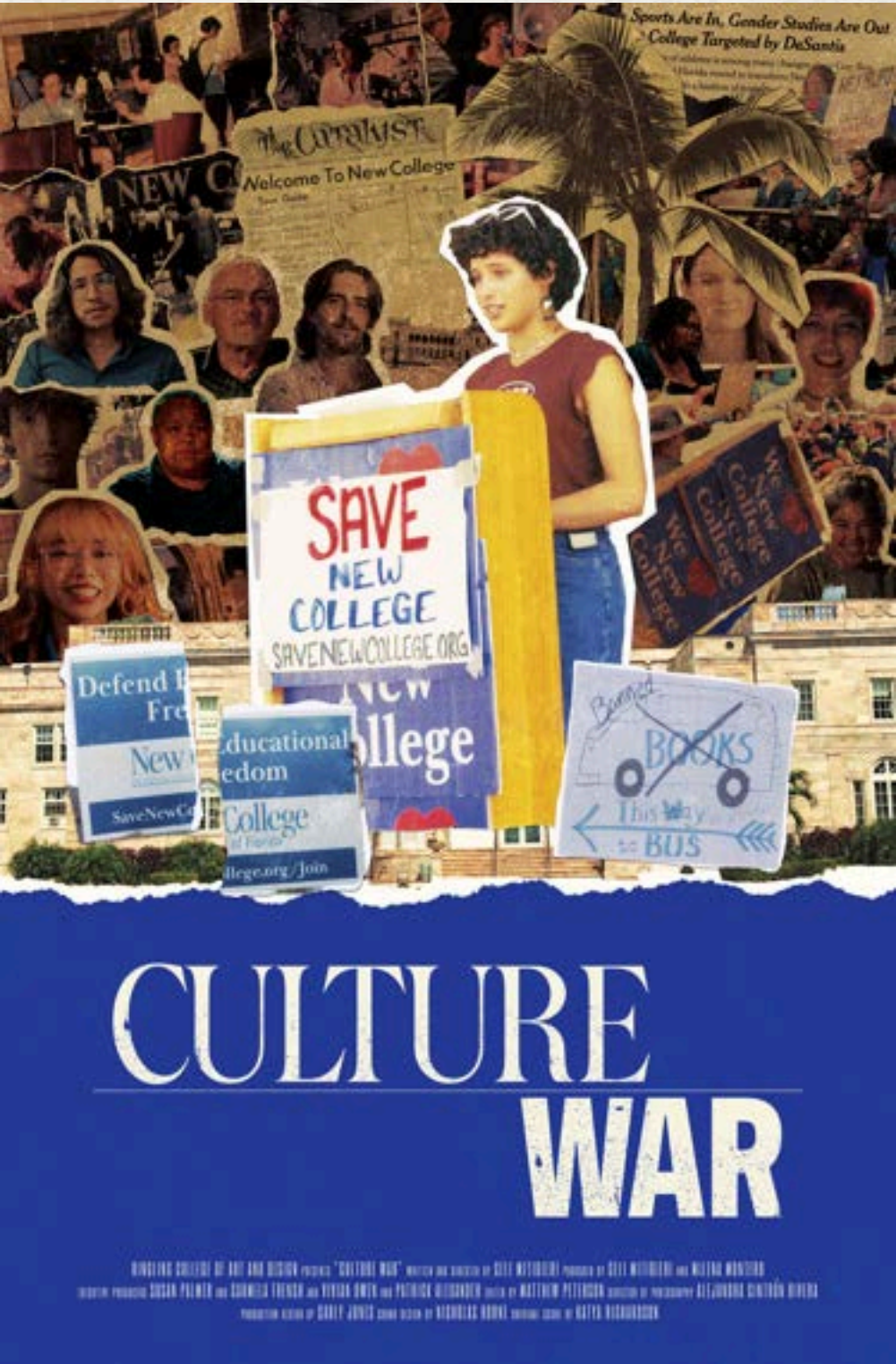


YOLEIDY
Former Chief Diversity Officer,
Fired by current administration

STILLS



POSTER



BEHIND-THE-SCENES & AWARDS



Awards

- [The Telly Awards](#) | Bronze Telly | May 2025
- [44th College Television Awards](#) | Nominee for Nonfiction Series | April 2025
- [National Film Festival for Talented Youth \(NFFTY\)](#) | Jury Award | April 2025
- [Imagine This Women's International Film Festival](#) | Best Emerging Filmmaker | 2025
- [Ivy Film Festival](#) | Grand Jury Award | April 2025
- Ringling College of Art & Design | Best Documentary | May 2024
- Ringling College of Art & Design | Best Editing | May 2024

Festivals

- [Central Florida Film Festival](#) | Official Selection | Mount Dora, FL | 2025
- [Through Women's Eyes International Film Festival](#) | Official Selection | Sarasota, FL | 2025
- [National Film Festival for Talented Youth \(NFFTY\)](#) | Washington State Premiere | Seattle, WA | 2025
- [Sarasota Film Festival](#) | Official Selection | Sarasota, FL | 2025
- [Florida Film Festival](#) | Official Selection | Winter Park, FL | 2025
- [Ivy Film Festival](#) | Official Selection | Providence, RI | 2025
- [Fort Myers Film Festival](#) | Official Selection | Fort Myers, FL | 2025
- [Mometu College Film Festival](#) | Official Selection | Los Angeles, CA | 2025
- [Imagine This Women's International Film Festival](#) | Official Selection | New York City, NY | 2025
- [Subtropic Film Festival](#) | Official Selection | West Palm Beach, FL | 2025

Press

- [Television Academy Foundation](#) | 44th College Television Awards Nominees Revealed
- [Variety](#) | 27th Annual Sarasota Film Festival (EXCLUSIVE)
- [SRQ Magazine](#) | The 26th Annual Reel Equals Film Festival Brings New Voices to Sarasota
- [The Suncoast Post](#) | Sarasota Film Festival Announces Full Program Slate for 27th Annual Edition

CREDITS

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY

Celi Mitidieri

PRODUCED BY

Celi Mitideri

Milena Montero

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Susan Palmer

Carmela French

Patrick Alexander

Vivian Owen

EDITOR

Matthew Peterson

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Alejandra Cintrón Rivera

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Carly Jones

SOUND DESIGN

Nicholas Horne

ORIGINAL SCORE BY

Katya Richardson

FEATURING

(In order of appearance)

Libby Harrity

Gaby Batista

Kyla Baldonado

Alexander (Fish) Sauer

Isaac Tellechea

Jono Miller

Grace Keenan

Chai Leffler

Steven Walker

Sophia Brown

Chloe Rusek

Colin Jefferis

Yoleidy Rosario-Hernandez

Amy Reid

Jackson Dawson

Steven Davis

Amanda Gilliland

Beaux Delaune

CREW

Additional Cinematography - Celi Mitidieri

Camera Operator - Nadia Grasso

Camera Operator - Almendra Kovač Akel

Camera Operator - Beau Agrawal

Camera Operator - Alex Wilson

Camera Operator - Xiang Li

Gaffer - Almendra Kovač Akel

Gaffer - Beau Agrawal

Sound Mixer - Violet DiCara

Sound Mixer - Nicholas Horne

Boom Operator - Violet DiCara

Colorist - CJ Julian

Post Services by Away Team

Co-Editor - Celi Mitidieri

Assistant Editor - Alex Wilson

CREW

Archive Researcher - Claire Simmons

Archive Researcher - Juan Alvarez-Fernandez

Motion Designer - Gergo Varga

Graphic Designer - Sandra Lee

Production Assistant - Alex Wilson

Production Assistant - Nadia Grasso

Production Assistant - Yazmin Jarrin

Production Assistant - Alex Alfaro

Production Assistant - Ella Satterfield

FACULTY & STAFF ADVISORS

Patrick Alexander

Matt Gissing

Nick Palladino

Troy Logan

Mark Parry

Sheryl Haler

Bradley Battersby

Sena Kwasi Amengor

Kaylene Taylor

Damon Maulucci

ADDITIONAL IMAGES & FOOTAGE

The New College Experiment

Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)

Fox Business

Christopher F. Rufo

MSNBC

Fox News Channel

ABC Action News

Anthony J. Lenzo

ADD Filmmakers

Herald Tribune

Thomas Bender – USA TODAY NETWORK

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THANK YOU!

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SOCIAL MEDIA



CULTURE WAR