



FIVE NEW WOMEN DIRECTORS OF COLOR SUPPORTED BY CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES FOR THE DIVERSITY FELLOWS INITIATIVE

Supported filmmakers will come together to workshop their projects that explore stories taking place in Turkey, the Texas-Mexico border, New Orleans, the South Bronx, and Kenya

NEW YORK, NY (APRIL 18, 2018)—Chicken & Egg Pictures, a nonprofit organization supporting women in nonfiction filmmaking, has chosen five projects to support through their Diversity Fellows Initiative, which aims to identify and increase the number of talented, diverse women nonfiction directors in the industry pipeline, and help their films reach the fullest potential in order to contribute to our greater goal of using artful and innovative storytelling to catalyze social change.

The 2018 Diversity Fellows are Beyza Boyacioglu; Robie Flores; Nadia Hallgren; Nailah Jefferson; and Maia von Lekow, with co-director Chris King; hailing from Istanbul, Turkey; Eagle Pass, TX; New Orleans, LA; The Bronx, NY; and Nairobi, Kenya, respectively.

In addition to a \$5,000 grant and a seven-month mentorship program, the Fellows will come together in upstate New York for a multiday storytelling retreat aimed to help develop and strengthen their film's narratives. "This year we'll be doing a deep dive into storytelling," says Lucila Moctezuma, Director of Programs at Chicken & Egg Pictures. "The five-day retreat will allow our Diversity Fellows to have complete focus on their art and provide them with the space to learn from one another's diverse perspectives and artistic practices. We are so thrilled to be working with these exceptional group of women filmmakers who have such important stories to tell and such special ways of telling them."

The Diversity Fellows Initiative is made possible with the generous support of The Harnisch Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Time Warner Foundation. For additional information please visit: <https://chickeneggpics.org/programs/#diversity-fellows-initiative>. Participants of the Diversity Fellows Initiative are chosen through the Accelerator Lab Open Call process. The 2019 Accelerator Lab Open Call will launch on May 1.

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2018 Diversity Fellows Initiative Grantees

A Prince From Outer Space: Zeki Müren, directed by Beyza Boyacioglu

This experimental, multilayered film uses Zeki Müren, Turkey's most celebrated singer and modern day queer icon, as a prism to explore the country's internal contradictions, from its founding as a modern, secular nation to the current crisis. Zeki, "Turkey's Liberace," was a chameleon-like figure. He expertly used his celebrity to navigate society—allowing audiences to see in him only what they wanted to see. The film deconstructs how myths are made and consumed, as it provides a window onto Turkey, a nation existing between the worlds of the east and of the west while belonging to neither.

Beyza Boyacioglu is a filmmaker and artist from Istanbul, currently based in New York. Her work has been exhibited in MoMA Documentary Fortnight, IDFA, RIDM, Anthology Film Archives, Morelia International Film Festival, Brooklyn Museum, Maysles Cinema, and !f Istanbul, among others. She was a part of MIT Open Documentary Lab between 2014–2017. She's been a fellow at UnionDocs, Flaherty Seminar, and Greenhouse. She holds an MASc in Comparative Media Studies from MIT and an MFA in Computer Art from SVA.

The In Between, directed by Robie Flores

At the intersection of the northern Mexico desert and the plains of southwest Texas exists a symbiotic community. Here, people's lives are spread across two countries, connected by a bridge that everyone must travel. For some, crossing to the other side means getting to work or school. For others, life straddling the border is the only way to keep their family together. Through a collection of interweaving vignettes, *The In Between* is a poetic ode to a greater reality of the border than the one portrayed on the news, offering a nuanced and intimate portrait of a place and its people at the heart of Mexican-American identity.

Robie Flores grew up on the US/Mexico border. She is an independent filmmaker and video editor based in New York City. She previously worked with Loki Films as an assistant on *Detropia*, *The Education of Mohammed Hussein*, and ESPN's Nine for IX documentary, *Branded*. Her work has appeared on CNN and Bloomberg and has been featured by Teen Vogue, Fusion, Allure, and i-D Vice. *The In Between* is her first feature film.

***Omnipresence*, directed by Nadia Hallgren**

A look at the complexities of a South Bronx housing project over the course of a summer.

Nadia Hallgren is an award-winning filmmaker and director of photography from The Bronx, New York. With a focus on vérité storytelling, her cinematography credits include the Sundance award-winner *Motherland* (2017), Academy Award-nominated and Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winner *Trouble the Water* (2008), and Sundance award-winner *Trapped* (2016). She has directed short films and series for Field of Vision, Topic, and PBS; and is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, a 2018 Concordia Studio Artist in Residence, and an alum of International Center of Photography. Most recently, Nadia won the special jury prize at SXSW 2018 for an independent episodic series she directed about women running for office in response to Trump being elected.

***Commuted*, directed by Nailah Jefferson**

Commuted tells the story of Danielle Metz, a 52-year-old woman trying to find her footing after spending nearly half of her life in prison. In 2016 Danielle's was one of 568 life sentences President Obama overturned. Her life story is just one example of how the US criminal justice system impacts black families—before she was incarcerated, she had lost one boyfriend to police violence, another to a wrongful conviction, and then found herself in prison due to involvement with her husband's drug ring. As Danielle starts to right her path, we reflect with her on a life interrupted.

Nailah Jefferson's first film, *Vanishing Pearls*, told the story of a little known African American oyster fishing community and their fight for justice after the BP oil spill. After acquisition by ARRAY/AFFRM, *Vanishing Pearls* streams on The Urban Movie Channel. Nailah was nominated for a 2017 National Magazine Ellie award for Essence Magazine's *Black Girl Magic Episode 4*. Nailah's first narrative, *Plaquemines*, was chosen as an American Black Film Festival HBO Shorts finalist and is available on HBO, HBO GO, and HBO On Demand.

***The Letter*, directed by Maia von Lekow & Chris King**

Along the coast of Kenya, a frenzied mix of consumerism and Christianity is turning hundreds of families against their elders, branding them as witches as a means to steal their land. Ninety-two-year-old Margaret Kamango stands accused by her sons, while her strong-willed daughters try to protect her. This dangerous dispute is seen through the eyes of Margaret's grandson, Karisa, who returns home from the city to investigate and is ultimately forced to choose which side he is on.

Maia von Lekow is a Kenyan filmmaker and musician. Maia has worked as director, producer, and sound recordist for several film and music projects since founding Circle and Square Productions in 2009. She has performed on stages across the world and continues to compose music for films. She received an African Movie Academy Award for her song Uko Wapi, and was named a goodwill ambassador for UNHCR on World Refugee Day 2013.

Chris King is an award-winning filmmaker based in Nairobi, Kenya. Born in Australia, Chris studied at The School of Creative Arts at the University of Melbourne before relocating to Kenya in 2007, where he has worked as a cinematographer, editor, animator, director, and producer in both factual and non-factual shorts, features, and music videos. In 2009, Chris co-founded Circle and Square Productions with his wife Maia and, in the same year received an African Movie Academy Award in Editing for his work on the Kenyan feature film, *From a Whisper*.

The Letter is Chris and Maia's first feature documentary.

ABOUT CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES

Chicken & Egg Pictures supports women nonfiction filmmakers whose artful and innovative storytelling catalyzes social change. Chicken & Egg Pictures envisions a world in which women nonfiction filmmakers, representing a range of diverse experiences and backgrounds, are fully supported to realize their artistic goals and vision, build sustainable careers, and achieve parity in all areas of the film industry. Chicken & Egg Pictures was founded in 2005 by Julie Parker Benello, Wendy Ettinger, and Judith Helfand. Since inception, Chicken & Egg Pictures has awarded over \$6 million in grants and provided thousands of hours of mentorship and creative support to over 250 films. Films supported by Chicken & Egg Pictures have won numerous awards, including Oscars® and Emmys®; they have shifted deeply entrenched attitudes; and they have changed policy on a variety of critical human rights and social justice issues.

For additional information please visit: <http://chickeneggpics.org/>.

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