

PRESS RELEASE

JEROME FOUNDATION'S 2025 MINNESOTA & NEW YORK CITY FILM GRANTS ANNOUNCED

ST. PAUL, MN, October 29, 2025—Jerome Foundation announces 18 grants to early career Minnesota and New York City filmmakers totaling \$499,513: 6 grants to early career Minnesota filmmakers totaling \$139,960 and 12 grants to early career New York City filmmakers totaling \$359,553. These decisions were based on the recommendations of separate Minnesota and New York City grant program review panels and affirmed by the Foundation Board of Directors.

The Foundation seeks to fund filmmakers who take creative risks, pursue innovative approaches, have a clarity of purpose and vision for imaginative storytelling, are engaged directly with those involved in their filmmaking, and work to build relationships with and impact their creative community and the field.

The Minnesota and New York City Film Production grant supports up to \$30,000 for all stages of production for new short- or long-form projects in the ever-expanding creative genres of experimental, narrative, animation, and documentary film—or in any hybrid combination of these forms.

Of the 312 applications submitted for production grants, 16 grants were awarded to:

- » Charlie Ainsworth, MN, for the feature narrative drama ***The Road South***
- » Raven Johnson, MN, for the feature narrative drama ***Ruby: Portrait of a Black Teen in an American Suburb***
- » Prakshi Malik, MN, for the short experimental documentary ***Untitled Navigating Faith Project***
- » Yasmin Yassin, MN, for the short narrative drama ***Call Me Back***
- » Siji Awoyinka, NYC, for the feature documentary ***Ejire***
- » Margaret Brennan, NYC, for the surreal animated short ***Venerations***
- » Julia Chien, NYC, for the hybrid animated documentary ***her name was SARU***
- » Safiyah Chiniere, NYC, for the short narrative drama ***All for Her***
- » Lydia Cornett, NYC, for the feature experimental documentary ***The Grain of Voice***

- » Sekiya Dorsett, NYC, for the feature experimental documentary ***20 Years of Longing***
- » Ash Goh, NYC, for the feature narrative drama ***SUBTERRANEA***
- » Crystal Kayiza, NYC, for the feature documentary ***The Gardeners***
- » Matt Nadel, NYC, for the feature documentary ***Jailhouse Lawyer***
- » Rodrigo Olivar, NYC, for the feature documentary ***El pueblo salva al pueblo (We Save Us)***
- » Chloe Sarbib, NYC, for the short dark comedy ***Brace Yourself***
- » Sally Tran, NYC, for the feature mixed media documentary ***Born to Kill: Love, Money, Sin***

In Minnesota, an additional Filmmaker Mentorship grant is offered, supporting early career filmmakers to engage in self-designed mentorship. These grantees work with experienced directors and to further their filmmaking craft and/or professional skills while focusing on a specific film project. Of the 14 applications submitted for the filmmaker mentorship program, two grants were awarded to:

- » Olumide Famule, MN, for activities related to the docufiction short ***Sister Belonging***
- » Sara Osman, MN, for activities related to the experimental documentary ***When the Sky Mourns With Us***

ABOUT THE GRANTEES

Minnesota Production Grantees



CHARLIE AINSWORTH

The Road South

Grant Award: \$30,000

Charlie Ainsworth is a Deaf filmmaker, writer, and founder of Angry Deaf People, an indie company committed to expanding deaf narratives on screen. Since 2018, he has written nine short films, directing six, with his work—notably ***How to Caption Your Movie*** and ***Dinner Table Syndrome***—widely recognized in Deaf film communities worldwide.

Ainsworth has an MFA in screenwriting from the David Lynch Graduate School of Cinematic Arts. He blends the Deaf experience, social critique, and the absurd in his works. His next project, ***The Road South***, explores how sometimes the Deaf experience can become quite absurd, especially in the eyes of the norm.

He remains committed to growing the next wave of Deaf Cinema. Not just writing and directing but ensuring that untold Deaf stories are produced, seen, and... oh, god. I'm about to drop a cliché... heard.

Project Statement: When a deaf mortician is asked to embalm her estranged grandmother, she's pulled back into the orbit of the hearing family she was never truly part of. ***The Road South*** explores the divide between deaf and hearing relatives caused by a lifetime of language barriers.

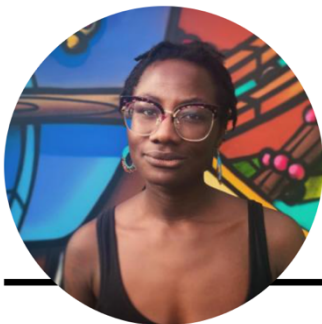


Photo credit: Raven Jackson

RAVEN JACKSON

Ruby: Portrait of a Black Teen in an American Suburb

Grant Award: \$30,000

Raven Johnson is a Liberian American filmmaker from Minnesota. Her work explores the realities of Black experiences in predominantly White spaces around the Midwest. Johnson is an assistant professor of Moving Images at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. She is a 2023–2025 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow, a 2023 McKnight Artist Fellow, and a 2022 SFFILM and Kenneth Rainin Fellow. Johnson received her MFA from NYU Tisch and is in development on her debut feature which has already received support from SFFILM and the Kenneth Rainin Foundation.

Project Statement: Set during the height of Covid-19 and racial justice protests after the murder of George Floyd, ***Ruby: Portrait of a Black Teen in an American Suburb*** follows the story of Ruby (16), a Liberian American teenager. She copes with her parents' sudden separation by seeking TikTok fame alongside her best friend, Kiki (16), but when Kiki begins dating a much older man, Ruby resolves to do anything to keep her best friend by her side.



Photo credit: Shashwat Malik

PRAKSHI MALIK

Untitled Navigating Faith Project

Grant Award: \$30,000

Prakshi Malik is an award-winning filmmaker who works collaboratively to make films that sway our collective imaginations. Raised in Delhi, India, and now based in Minnesota, Malik's narrative shorts—including ***Baahar*** and ***Embers***—have screened at festivals such as the New

Orleans Film Festival, PBS Short Film Festival, Jaipur International Film Festival, Tasveer South Asian Film Festival, and the Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival, among others. Her work has been supported by Austin Film Society, City of Minneapolis and Saint Paul Neighborhood Network. Malik's background in dance and ensemble theatre influences her empathy as a director and her rhythm as an editor. She holds a BA in Media and Cultural Studies from Macalester College and MFA in Film Production from the University of Texas at Austin.

Project Statement: The Untitled Navigating Faith Project (working title) is an experimental documentary. The film features BIPOC participants who share intimate stories of moving away from their religious upbringings and navigating new paths of faith and belonging. We are often introduced to religion and faith as children from our parents and elders. As we grow up and re-form our worldviews, our relationship with faith can change in profound ways that shifts our connections, celebrations, and ways of being. Weaving together oral history, storytelling, and personal archives with intimate moments ranging from mundane to sacred, the film opens a window onto the experiences of in-betweenness and the evolving nature of identity.



YASMIN YASSIN

Call Me Back

Grant Award: \$29,960

Yasmin Yassin is a filmmaker, photographer, and scientist based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her artistic practice explores subcultures and the invisible networks that hold them together. Her storytelling follows the friction—and harmony—between tradition and modern identity, guided

by her East African oral-storytelling heritage.

Her directorial debut, ***Dhaanto***, a short documentary on a Somali dance troupe, screened at the 2024 Minneapolis–St. Paul International Film Festival, the Millennium Film Workshop in New York, and internationally in East Africa and Canada, alongside community screenings across the Twin Cities. Yassin recently completed her short film ***Woman Land*** and is currently writing her first narrative feature. She was awarded the SPNN Fresh Vantage grant and is a member of FilmNorth. She has directed for Nike and Blue Cross Blue Shield, and has collaborated with Apple, the *New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *The New Yorker*, and the Walker Art Center.

Project Statement: *Call Me Back* is a narrative short exploring emerging adulthood and social connection. Sofia is a young twenty-something professional woman. Against the wishes of her culturally traditional family, she is living a fairly mundane and repetitive life alone in a new city. Things begin to change when she receives a voicemail that wasn't meant for her.

The film explores themes of isolation—how we may sometimes reach for intimacy and belonging in unexpected places. It digs into the concept of para-social relationships and

the ways digital spaces can offer both comfort and escape. ***Call Me Back*** offers a glimpse into how technology can be used to self-protect, substituting fleeting connections for otherwise more meaningful, and sometimes difficult-to-build, relationships in the real world.

New York City Production Grantees



Photo credit: Yetunde Babaeko

SIJI AWOYINKA

Ejire

Grant Award: \$30,000

Siji Awoyinka is an award winning multidisciplinary aural and visual storyteller. Born in London to Nigerian parents, he spent much of his early childhood in Lagos and London before moving to New York to further pursue his creative ambitions. His documentary feature film, ***Elder's Corner***, premiered at Sheffield Docs, UK, DOC NYC,

Blackstar Film Festival, HOTDOCS, and went on to win an Ethnomusicology Commendation Award at the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) Film Festival, and the Audience Award for Best Sounds Feature at Indie Memphis Film Festival (2021). His projects have received funding support from NYSCA, Open Society, Brooklyn Arts Council, and the Lucius & Eva Eastman Foundation.

Project Statement: ***Ejire*** is a feature-length documentary film which explores the mysticism of twins through the power of memory, ritual, restitution, and song. It follows the iconic Lijadu Sisters, a beloved Nigerian musical duo, through the final years of Kehinde's life, and Taiwo's reemergence.

Using archival footage, family pictures, vintage memorabilia, and scenes reenacted and captured on 16mm film, the film seeks to invoke and explore the past, and how memory/alternate memory may act as a catharsis for healing, guidance, and transformation. ***Ejire*** serves not only as a tribute to the unique twin connection but also as a broader exploration of identity, loss, and the human desire for wholeness in the face of profound change.



Photo credit: Will Simpson

MAGGIE BRENNAN

Venerations

Grant Award: \$29,553

Maggie Brennan is a Queens-based animator, director, writer, musician, etc. She is the creator of *Agoraphilia*, a series for Adult Swim SMALLS, which she also animated, directed, co-wrote, and scored. She wrote, directed, animated, and scored the short film *Our Bed Is Green*, which premiered at SXSW and went on to play numerous

Oscar-qualifying festivals worldwide, winning “Best Animation” at the Tacoma Film Festival. She also wrote, animated, and voiced a micro series for A Studio Digital about mall kiosk owners. Before moving into animation, she created comics, some of which appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Fader*, *Inverse*, and other publications. Her work often focuses on fiddly characters, technology, and perplexing visual minutiae.

Project Statement: *Venerations* is an animated short film about a religious mother and her very online daughter who independently obsess over two different sets of mysterious human remains: the relics of a beloved virgin Saint and the case file of an unidentified murder victim. Surreal and subtly comic, *Venerations* reflects on things like mythmaking, materiality, and the strangeness of womanhood.



Photo credit: Gregory Shark

JULIA CHIEN

her name was SARU

Grant Award: \$30,000

Julia Chien is a Taiwanese American filmmaker and animator born and raised in suburban Maryland, currently based in Brooklyn. Julia’s films all center lonely, lowly animals. There is something extremely genuine and relatable about being alone at the bottom of a food chain. Her films explore the internal, the textural, and the gooey.

Julia’s practice plays with traditional mixed-media animation techniques, live puppetry, and how the two can intersect. Her films have screened internationally at festivals such as Animafest Zagreb, Sweaty Eyeballs, Athens Animfest, Animafantasia, and more. Julia recently performed her first theatrical work, a multimedia puppet piece, as an artist-in-residence with the Object Movement Festival at the Center at West Park. She graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2022 with a BFA in Film/Animation/Video. She now teaches traditional animation techniques at RISD. She works professionally as a VFX artist and has worked on Emmy award-winning productions.

Project Statement: My mother grew up on a farm in a small village just outside of Taichung, Taiwan during Kuomintang's takeover of the country. She lived in a big family of four daughters and three sons. Her father, my grandfather, was a stern and often abusive patriarch, but he adored his animals. He kept dogs, pigs, turkeys, and chickens.

When my mother was nine, her uncle visited the farm with a gift: a Formosan Rock Macaque in a cage. My grandfather named her Saru. Based on my mother's true story, ***her name was SARU*** is an experimental animated narrative short film using a mixture of ink, paint-on-glass, shadow, and manipulated live-action footage. Through the character of Saru, the film explores the complex family dynamics my mother experienced as a child and still experiences today. Saru spent years caged and chained to my family. She deserves an honorable end to her story.



Photo credit: Kinga Gurba

SAFIYAH CHINIERE

All For her

Grant Award: \$30,000

Safiyah Chiniere is a Jamaican American filmmaker and artist based in Brooklyn, New York. She uses film to amplify the stories and voices of people of color, women, femmes, and the LGBTQIA+ community, often disrupting the gender binary and expanding how we see identity on screen. A self-taught filmmaker, New Jersey-born and

Virginia Beach-bred, Chiniere grounds her work in the interior lives of these communities and has developed a visual style that moves with care and intention. Chiniere's short film ***You Don't Have to Like Me*** premiered at NewFest, Frameline, Inside Out, and BFI Flare London and presents a fresh, intimate approach to capturing faces, bodies, and the many expressions of closeness. She slows the pace and magnifies space to make room for vulnerability, authenticity, and catharsis, highlighting people and moments that are often overlooked, dismissed, or delegitimized while maintaining wholehearted and sincere storytelling.

Project Statement: ***All For Her*** is a portrait of a granddaughter's love and care for her grandmother while she fights to hold on to her own independence and navigate dating as a lesbian woman. The film explores the complexities of caregiving and how it can quietly pull you away from yourself. During COVID, Chiniere cared for her grandmother, who was unexpectedly diagnosed with dementia and passed away silently in 2023, the day after her birthday. That loss moved her to honor her grandmother's legacy while staying true to the meaning of caretaking and the realities of balancing a social and romantic life.

Many caregivers sacrifice personal dreams to show up for the people we love. This film highlights the resilience and beauty in that choice—the constant push and pull between duty and the need for selfhood. Grounded in queer experience and tender intimacy, the story makes room for stillness. ***All For Her*** gives voice to those caring for family while trying to live their own lives and shedding light on the emotional toll caregiving often hides.



Photo credit: Amber Elison

LYDIA CORNETT

The Grain of Voice

Grant Award: \$30,000

Lydia Cornett is a filmmaker, composer and artist. Her work explores the contours of labor, language and artistic expression across nonfiction and experimental forms. Her films have screened at festivals such as True/False Film Festival, Camden Film Festival, Rooftop Films, Sheffield DocFest, Slamdance, BAMCinemaFest, Hamptons

International Film Festival, and the Ann Arbor Film Festival, where she was awarded the Tom Berman Award for Most Promising Filmmaker in 2023. Her work has been distributed and featured by *The New Yorker*, POV Shorts, Vimeo Staff Picks, Nowness, and *Paper Magazine*.

Cornett has held residencies and fellowships at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, the Jacob Burns Film Center, UnionDocs, BRICLab, and Marble House Project. She has received support for her work from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Pulitzer Center, the Princess Grace Foundation, Chicken & Egg Pictures, Field of Vision, the Fulbright Program, and New York Foundation for the Arts.

Project Statement: *The Grain of Voice*, Lydia's feature directorial debut, explores the ineffable essence of the human voice and its bodily origins, weaving together portraits of vocalists who blur the boundaries of genre, gender, ability, and technology.



Photo credit: Rick Day NYC

SEKIYA DORSETT

The Grain of Voice

Grant Award: \$30,000

Sekiya Dorsett's thought-provoking films have won her much praise. *The Revival: Women and the Word*, which premiered in 2017 and was quickly acquired by Women Make Movies. Dorsett also directed a four-episode documentary series for NBC News titled *Stonewall Revolution* which is currently on Peacock—an

achievement that earned her both a GLAAD Media Award and NLGJA's Excellence in Digital Journalism accolade. Barnard College named her their inaugural Artemis Rising Foundation Fellow for excellence in non-fiction storytelling. Her most recent film, *Caribbean Queen* in association with Caribbean Equality Project, addressing LGBTQ stigma in Caribbean communities, premiered at BAM during NewFest 2023, earning both the Audience Award and recognition for her directing. She is a Firelight Media Fellow for 2024–2026. Her films have been screened at the Tribeca Film Festival, the Urbanworld Film Festival, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Outfest Film Festival.

Project Statement: Amid shifting borders and rising intolerance, a Black lesbian couple from the Caribbean looks back on twenty years of love and longing. As they attempt to become mothers in a country that threatens to erase them, their story becomes a tender, urgent act of resistance. ***20 Years of Longing*** is a personal memory, a collective memory, and an ongoing future. It is an intimate, character-driven documentary that follows a married Black lesbian couple from Haiti and the Bahamas, as they navigate love, immigration, faith, and queer family-making in a country that refuses to fully see us. It is not just a love story. It is a testimony.



Photo credit: Dan Chein

ASH GOH

SUBTERRANEA

Grant Award: \$30,000

Ash Goh Hua is a Singapore-born and raised, New York-based filmmaker. Utilizing both documentary and narrative forms, Goh tells personal stories that reveal the inherently embodied politics of relation, society and culture. Named one of the 25 New Faces of Film by *Filmmaker Magazine* in 2022, Goh is a 2024 Berlinale Talent and a 2025 Creative Capital Award recipient.

Project Statement: ***SUBTERRANEA*** is a short narrative film about Fang Lin, a teenager who does not want to exist. Between her naggy mother, a stifling environment, and a falling out with her best friend, she feels utterly trapped in ennui. Meanwhile, the magic of Singapore's natural world begins to rumble, threatening to break the levee.



CRYSTAL KAYIZA

The Gardeners

Grant Award: \$30,000

Crystal Kayiza is an artist and filmmaker based in New York City. A member of the New Negress Film Society, she is a recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Creative Capital Award, the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship, and the Sundance Ignite Fellowship. Her most recent film,

Rest Stop, premiered at the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival and won the 2023 Jury Prize for Best US Short Film at the Sundance Film Festival. Her short, ***See You Next Time***, was an official selection of the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and released by *The New Yorker*. Her film, ***Edgcombe***, was an official selection of the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and was distributed by POV. Named one of *Filmmaker Magazine's* "25 New Faces of Independent Film," Crystal is currently in production on her first feature film.

Project Statement: As keepers of one of the oldest Black cemeteries in Mississippi, The Worthy Women of Watkins Street nurture the liminal space between past, present, and future. ***The Gardeners*** is a feature non-fiction film that archives the labor of these aging worldbuilders, offering a blueprint to navigate memory, legacy and mortality while revealing the divine spirit residing in their daily lives.



Photo credit: Luz Gallardo for ITVS

MATT NADEL

Jailhouse Lawyer

Grant Award: \$30,000

Matt Nadel is a filmmaker and journalist interested in stories about justice, survival, and historical memory. His short documentaries have been distributed by outlets like the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and PBS. Matt's most recent film, ***Cashing Out*** (*The New Yorker* 2025), tells the story of a controversial industry that emerged in the early days of AIDS—and his own unlikely connection to it. Previously, Matt directed ***An Unlikely Last Resort for Getting Out of Prison***, a first-person documentary about clemency released by *New York Times* Opinion, and ***CANS Can't Stand*** (*The New Yorker* 2023), which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival Emerging Filmmaker Showcase and was nominated for a GLAAD Media Award. Matt is from Florida and now lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Project Statement: In the shadows of the American prison system, a network of self-taught legal warriors, known as jailhouse lawyers, are using the law to dismantle the carceral machine from within. ***Jailhouse Lawyer***, the debut feature documentary from director Matt Nadel, enters this hidden world through the story of Quentin Lewis, a veteran jailhouse lawyer in New York who defends his peers against the abuses of the prison system—and, in the process, offers them hope, protection, and a path to rehabilitation. But even with an extraordinary record of legal victories, there's one case Lewis is still fighting to win: his own. Blending vérité captured in prison, intimate longitudinal interviews, and never-before-digitized archives, ***Jailhouse Lawyer*** offers a rare portrait of the hidden figures who, from behind prison walls, are using the law to transform themselves and the system that confines them.



RODRIGO OLIVAR

We Save Us (El pueblo salva al pueblo)

Grant Award: \$30,000

Rodrigo Olivar is a multidisciplinary director from Mexico City, based in Brooklyn, New York, dedicated to shining a light on multicultural narratives. He holds a BFA in Media Studies from Universidad Iberoamericana (CDMX) and an

MFA in Computer Art from the School of Visual Arts (New York). For over eight years, he served as Head of Video at Remezcla, the leading Latino media company, where he directed and produced award-winning content. His films have screened at the New Orleans Film Festival, NY Latino Film Festival, and Morelia Film Festival, among many others. His latest short, ***Thank You, Have a Nice Day***, won the Max Latino Short Competition. Through his work, Rodrigo explores the intersections of culture, identity, and resilience, crafting visually compelling stories that connect communities and spark dialogue.

Project Statement: ***We Save Us (El pueblo salva al pueblo)*** is a feature-length documentary about Indigenous Mexican delivery workers in New York City confronting a wave of violent robberies. With no support from authorities, they draw on the traditions of their hometown to form a civil guard, reclaiming safety and dignity. As their organizing grows, new challenges test their resolve and expand their solidarity, revealing the strength of collective action.

The film blends cinematic vérité with on-body cameras, social media content, and motion graphics to create an immersive portrait of workers who keep New York running yet remain invisible. Supported by Gotham Week Project Market and Tribeca Work-in-Progress, ***We Save Us*** reframes narratives of labor, migration, and justice—showing not only the hardships these workers endure, but also the power of community to envision change.



Photo credit: Jorn Swart

CHLOE SARBIB

Brace Yourself

Grant Award: \$30,000

Chloe Sarbib is an American and French Algerian DGA filmmaker drawn to characters who get in their own way. She is a 2025 Sundance Directors and Screenwriters Lab fellow whose previous shorts have won Best Student Short at Provincetown Film Festival, Best New York Short at NewFest, and the DGA Student Film Jury Award, and have played many Oscar- and BAFTA-qualifying festivals. She was selected for Tribeca/Chanel's Through Her Lens program and directed an episode of the CW/Netflix's ***In the Dark***. An alumna of Yale (BA) and Columbia (MFA), where she won the Zaki Gordon Award for excellence in screenwriting, she's received support from Cine Qua Non, Saltonstall, Indian Paintbrush, and more. She also studied at La Fémis in Paris and FAMU in Prague. Based in Brooklyn, she teaches at Montclair State University.

Project Statement: ***Brace Yourself*** is a dark comedy fiction short film about 15-year-old Mia Boukris, who is going to kill herself... but not until she gets her braces off.



SALLY TRAN

Born to Kill: Love, Money, Sin

Grant Award: \$30,000

Sally Tran is a NYC-based writer and director, originally from Vietnam and New Zealand. Her work centers on stories of underrepresented communities, often drawing from her Vietnamese roots. She blends scripted and unscripted formats, creating a distinct narrative voice

whose tone carries through both story and execution.

Her short ***Grandma Four Color Cards*** premiered at SXSW 2025, while her narrative short ***Don't*** (2024) received support from NYCWF, NYFA, MOME, Panavision, and the Vimeo BIPOC Fund, premiering internationally at TIFF. She is in post-production on ***Still a Go Between*** and received funding for ***Love Cycle*** from NALIP and Netflix.

Project Statement: ***Born to Kill: Love, Money, Sin*** is a raw feature-length mixed media documentary that uncovers the untold stories of Vietnamese refugees in New York City after the fall of Saigon. Confronted with systemic neglect and racial hostility, many were forced to navigate two worlds: one of hard-fought survival and another of crime and violence.

Through the voices of refugees, the film explores the desperate choices that shaped their lives. Some fight for a better future. Others are drawn into the notorious Born to Kill gang, which was founded by fellow refugee David Thai as both a brotherhood and a weapon against a city that treated them as disposable. The mantra Love, Money, Sin became their code, binding them together through loyalty, blood, and sacrifice. The film has also received support from BRIC and the Tribeca Film Institute.

Minnesota Filmmaker Mentorship Grantees



OLUMIDE FAMULE

Sister Belonging

Grant Award: \$10,000

Olu Famule is a visual artist and filmmaker, co-founder and one of the festival directors of Cinefilm—a QTBIPOC-centered film festival. He draws on his cultural background as Nigerian American and experience as a cinematographer, video editor, and event organizer to tell stories, mentor emerging artists, and develop innovative ways to bring creatives together.

Photo credit: Sunmi Famule

Famule is also a co-founder of TDM5, a visual arts incubator that supports emerging Black visual artists in releasing their first projects while organizing art and film events that engage the community.

Project Statement: *Sister Belonging* is a short documentary which follows a group of African women in northern Minnesota and rural Wisconsin and explores their close-knit community amidst the isolating and often hostile Midwest. Blending documentary-style storytelling with an abstract lens and the addition of fictional elements, the film immerses viewers into their world.



SARA OSMAN

When the Sky Mourns With Us

Grant Award: \$10,000

Sara A. Osman is a legal advocate, documentary filmmaker, and cultural practitioner from Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is a co-founder of The Qalanjo Project, a Somali cultural organization and creative arts studio in Minneapolis that promotes cultural production,

community archival work, and grassroots social change through the arts. She develops programs that uplift artistry in community; the themes of home, belonging, and cultural preservation are central to her work. Osman is a lifelong community organizer and anti-racism advocate who has worked extensively on migration and human rights issues across multiple regions, including the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Her legal and creative interests lie at the intersection of cultural and legal frameworks, how policies shape identities and narratives, and how filmmaking can serve as a form of advocacy and resistance. Her artmaking has received support from organizations including NeXt Doc, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, the Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, Firelight Media, the City of Minneapolis' Department of Arts & Cultural Affairs, Mamá Papaya, and the Minnesota State Arts Board.

Project Statement: *When the Sky Mourns With Us* is a feature-length experimental documentary film that investigates Somali death culture and grieving practices across space and time. The film examines how communities have honored the dead through precolonial rituals, Islamic burial rites, and the collective traditions that once shaped everyday life. It simultaneously traces the disruptions and adaptations brought by war, displacement, and migration. Through poetry, oral testimony, and intimate observation, the film traces how Somalis honor the dead, carry memory, and navigate loss across generations and geographies. At once elegy and inquiry, the film seeks to explore what endures when mourning is fractured, how rituals evolve and change over time, and what remains when grief is experienced both collectively and in isolation.

PRESS CONTACT

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For downloadable images, go to <https://www.jeromefdn.org/logos>. Individual artist images are available upon request.

ABOUT JEROME FOUNDATION

Jerome Foundation, founded in 1964 by artist and philanthropist Jerome Hill (1905-1972), honors his legacy through multi-year grants to support the creation, development, and presentation of new works by early career artists.

Jerome Foundation supports early-career artists and culture bearers who take creative risks, pursue innovative artistic approaches, and demonstrate a clear creative purpose and vision. By prioritizing artists at this pivotal stage, we seek to nurture their creative growth and recognize the dynamic, multi-dimensional impact they have in fostering thriving, evolving communities.

Jerome Foundation is rooted in the practices of belonging, nurture, equity, love and respect, where every voice is valued, every story matters, and learning is embraced as a continuous journey. These practices, along side our values of creative risk, innovation, and humility, support our relational and trust-based approach to grantmaking and our working with artists, culture bearers, and arts leaders.

The Foundation offers grant programs across various creative fields in Minnesota and the five boroughs of New York City, providing direct support to early-career artists and culture bearers, as well as to arts organizations and ecosystem initiatives aligned with Jerome's practices and values, that offer ongoing programs, services, or opportunities for multiple early-career artists in our funding areas. We steward our financial assets through a values-aligned investment approach that considers the impact of our decisions on the communities we serve.