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California Humanities Awards \$350K to 13 California Documentary Projects for Production, Research & Development

(Oakland, CA)—California Humanities is pleased to announce \$350,000 in awards to 13 new film and podcast productions through the 2021 California Documentary Project grant program.

The California Documentary Project (CDP) grant program supports humanities-based media productions that seek to document California in all its complexity. Since 2003, California Humanities has awarded over \$6.5 million to projects that use the humanities to provide context, depth, and perspective; enhance our understanding of California and its cultures, peoples, and histories; and reach and engage statewide and national audiences through broadcasts, festivals, community screenings, and in classrooms, libraries and more.

This year, nine CDP Production Grants and four Research and Development Grants will support nonfiction films and podcasts that tell essential and timely California stories from around the state. These newly funded CDP projects uncover, interpret, and share the stories of California and Californians. From a film about the 1960s origins of an unrenowned pioneering street dance subculture in Oakland, to a podcast series that documents the impact of the recent Santa Cruz Mountain wildfires, to a film exploring the role of new wave music in shaping identity among Vietnamese refugees in Orange County, each project adds a new layer to a complex and growing portrait of the state. Together, the awarded projects help us better understand who we are and where we live.

California Humanities' President & CEO Julie Fry states, "We are grateful to have received so many applications and know that California is full of important stories that illustrate the diversity and richness of our state. We congratulate our newest grantees, knowing that the voices amplified by these grants will grow our collective understanding of the people and cultures of California."

California Documentary Projects Awarded in 2021

CDP Production Grants:

BLACK MOTHERS

Project Director: Débora Souza Silva

Sponsor Organization: Center for Independent Documentary

BLACK MOTHERS is the first feature-length documentary to examine the “Mothers of the Movement”, a growing, nationwide network of mothers whose children have been victims of racial violence. With unprecedented access, the film follows women’s journeys who work to disrupt the cycle of violence, including Wanda Johnson. A California mother, she channels the pain of the murder of her child, Oscar Grant, into organizing for justice and accountability.

BOOGALOO ORIGINALS

Project Director: Spencer Wilkinson

Sponsor Organization: Higher Gliffs

BOOGALOO ORIGINALS explores the pioneering, yet little-known, subculture of California street dancing that emerged out of Oakland in the 1960s. Told through the lives of the original practitioners, boogaloo’s 50-year history is detailed from its rise during the civil rights era, to its co-evolution with funk music, and then its decline with the advent of hip-hop, and finally to the current upswell in revival efforts.

DEEP ROUTES

Project Director: Eli Welbourne

Sponsor Organization: Future Roots Inc.

DEEP ROUTES is a collaboration between Los Angeles’ Metro Art and dublab radio that explores the relationship between the city’s cultural and musical histories and the built environment, specifically major transit lines. Drawing upon LA’s transit topographies as a guiding framework, DEEP ROUTES uses music to tell stories of creative resilience and marginalized communities and cultures that are overlooked or excluded from mainstream historical narratives.

I DIDN’T SEE YOU THERE

Project Director: Reid Davenport

Sponsor Organization: Through My Lens

Spurred by a circus tent that goes up outside his Oakland apartment, a disabled filmmaker connects the ostensibly antiquated institution of the Freak Show with his own life. I DIDN’T SEE YOU THERE is a film shot entirely from the filmmaker’s literal physical perspective, both from his wheelchair and his two feet. As he explores the public’s gaze, his sense of home, and lost love, he ultimately wonders if the very act of filming his personal life perpetuates the legacy of freakdom.

LOST & FOUND: THE CZU AUGUST LIGHTNING FIRES DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

Project Director: Nikki Silva

Sponsor Organization: The Kitchen Sisters Productions

In the aftermath of the devastating 2020 CZU August Lightning Fires in the Santa Cruz Mountains, The Kitchen Sisters produce a series of audio stories on multiple platforms. They will document this historic natural disaster, its impact on the region and its people, and how it reflects a much larger California and global story.

MIJA

Project Director: Isabel Castro

Sponsor Organization: International Documentary Association

Raised in an undocumented family in San Bernardino, 26-year-old Doris Muñoz longed for a Chincanx sound in independent music. In college, she took matters into her own hands and decided to become a music manager. Set against the backdrop of aggressive anti-immigration policy and a music industry in crisis, MIJA tells the story of a young Chicana woman discovering herself and carving out a space for her culture.

NEW WAVE

Project Director: Elizabeth Ai

Sponsor Organization: Women Make Movies

NEW WAVE tells the story of how a little-known music scene that started in Orange County spread throughout the Vietnamese diaspora in the 1980s. The film explores how the confluence of mass Vietnamese immigration and the influence of new wave music helped build community and identity among refugee youth.

NIHUNAVEA: MY HEART, MY CENTER

Project Directors: Colin Rosemont and Sandra Hernandez

Sponsor Organization: Film Independent

This documentary bears witness to the Tejon Indian Tribe's complex struggle to reclaim cultural heritage, spirituality, and tribal sovereignty. The film follows co-director Sandra Hernandez, an enrolled member and elected official of the Tejon Indian Tribe, as she forges a path through government agencies, museum institutions, and academia to revitalize the Kitanemuk language, repatriate artifacts, and strengthen the foundational core of her family and community.

SALLY

Project Director: Deborah Craig

Sponsor Organization: Center for Independent Documentary

SALLY is a portrait of Sally Gearhart, a "good Southern girl" who then helped transform the world for women and queer people. She co-founded the first-ever women studies program, wrote firebrand lesbian-feminist works and female-focused fantasy novels, established a utopian women's land community in Northern California, and battled for gay rights side-by-side with Harvey Milk in the 1970s. But how did a poster child of the

LGBTQ rights movement end up living alone in the woods, virtually forgotten by history?

CDP Research & Development Grants:

ARTBOUND - FEDERAL ART PROJECT EPISODE

Project Director: Juan Devis

Sponsor Organization: Public Media Group of Southern California

This one-hour documentary with short-form multi-platform content explores the history and legacy of the Federal Art Project, an early New Deal program started in 1935. Throughout its eight-year history, the program funded 10,000 visual artists who created long-lasting public artworks across the United States. The project will examine the impact of the work on our current cultural identity nationally and throughout California.

HANDS ON THE VINES

Project Director: Ray Telles

Sponsor Organization: Paradigm Productions

HANDS ON THE VINES examines Mexican immigrant vineyard workers and their struggles to become successful winemakers in the context of an intensely competitive wine industry. The documentary traces the saga of one family whose patriarch, Lupe Maldonado, first arrived in the Napa Valley as a bracero in the 1960s. With the help of his son and daughter-in-law, they eventually produce prize-winning wine from their own vineyard.

REIMAGINING WILDERNESS PODCAST

Project Director: Marissa Ortega-Welch

Sponsor Organization: KALW/San Francisco Unified School District

Wilderness as we know it is changing. From climate change impacting the land to smartphones keeping us constantly connected, wilderness is no longer a place to unplug in a land untouched by humans. In this podcast series, listeners will visit public lands to explore the concept of “wilderness,” its history, how it’s changing, and how the stories we tell about wilderness say a lot more about us than the land.

REVOLUTION AT OUR DOORSTEP: THE BATTLE OF TIJUANA

Project Director: Isaac Artenstein

Sponsor Organization: San Diego Historical Society dba San Diego History Center

REVOLUTION AT OUR DOORSTEP is the first documentary film to examine a 1911 conflict on the U.S.-Mexico border that was pivotal at the outset of the Mexican Revolution. The Baja California campaign that culminated with the Battle of Tijuana is a clear example of how the history, culture, and people of Mexico and Southern California have always been closely linked.

Learn more about the California Documentary Project Grant Program [here](#).

About California Humanities:

California Humanities, a nonprofit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, promotes the humanities—focused on ideas, conversation, and learning—as relevant, meaningful ways to understand the human condition and connect people to each other in order to help strengthen California. California Humanities has provided grants and programs across the state since 1975. To learn more, visit calhum.org, or like and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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