



For Immediate Release

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PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS CONTINUES TO BUILD CAPACITY THROUGH NEW INITIATIVES

Filmmakers to receive funding and mentorship from industry luminaries

HONOLULU, HI (May 2, 2024) – [Pacific Islanders in Communications](#) (PIC) has launched its inaugural Leanne K. Ferrer Filmmaker Fellowship in an effort to uplift emerging filmmakers and prepare them for future funding opportunities. The fellowship was developed in honor of the late Leanne K. Ferrer (former Executive Director of PIC and award-winning filmmaker) and her legacy of supporting the next generation of storytellers.

The six-month pilot program will support four emerging filmmakers through peer-group convenings and professional development opportunities. The four fellows will also be mentored by renowned producers Kerry Warkia and Tracy Rector. Kerry Warkia (Papua New Guinean / Scottish) has been at the forefront of New Zealand's most innovative content. After producing a number of comedy series, children's content and Māori Television's first drama series, Kerry produced the ground-breaking feature film WARU (2017). She was the recipient of the 2022 Hawai'i International Film Festival Leanne K. Ferrer Trailblazer award. Tracy Rector is an Emmy® Award winning producer with three decades of experience as a community organizer, educator, filmmaker, film programmer, arts curator and activist all infused with her deep roots in plant medicine. In 2023, FORBES recognized Tracy as a global climate leader changing the Film and TV Industries.

"PIC supports the filmmaking community by building capacity through our funding and talent development initiatives, and collaborating with filmmakers at every step of the creative process including development, distribution and marketing," said Cheryl Hirasu, Executive Director of Pacific Islanders in Communications. "This fellowship and our funding opportunities will help shine the spotlight on untold stories and offer fresh perspectives of the Indigenous Pacific Islander experience."

The fellowship falls in line with PIC's primary funding opportunities, the [Media Fund](#) and the [Shorts Fund](#), now open for applications through Friday, May 31, 2024. Projects applying to these funds must be intended for national public media distribution and represent a Pacific Islander point of view. Moving forward, PIC will open the call for applications for both of these initiatives twice a year – once in the spring, and once in the fall, giving filmmakers more opportunities to raise funds to complete their films. The Media Fund is PIC's longest-standing funding initiative, which provides up to \$65,000 in funds for single non-fiction projects of half an hour or an hour in length about the Indigenous Pacific Islander experience for two critical phases of production: Production and Post-production.

The Shorts Fund provides funding of up to \$25,000 for the completion of fiction and nonfiction short films up to 20 minutes in length. They can be standalone films, webisodes, or a proof of concept for a feature length film.

The first-ever participants of the Leanne K. Ferrer Fellowship are listed below with their short narrative and nonfiction film projects currently in development. For more information on PIC and to apply for funding, visit www.piccom.org.

2024 Leanne K. Ferrer Fellows:

Sonny Ganaden - THE ARRANGEMENTS

Sonny Ganaden is a writer, youth mentor, printmaker, lawyer, Hawai'i state representative, and first-time filmmaker. As a magazine writer and editor, he has published academic and legal articles discussing race, justice, and the arts, and magazine articles distributed internationally. He was named "Best Single Writer for Body of Work" in 2016 by the Hawai'i Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. As a youth mentor, he was the director of KVIBE, a vocation and sports program for Pacific Islander young men and boys in Kalihi from 2018-2020, where he still volunteers. As a lawyer, he has practiced criminal and family law since 2008, as an advocate for victims of domestic violence, and on behalf of a client facing the death penalty. As an artist, he has exhibited throughout the Pacific as a member of the Honolulu Printmakers since 2003, and was an Artist in Residence with the Honolulu Museum of Art in 2015. THE ARRANGEMENTS is his first screenplay.

Aukai Ligairi - KE KOA

J. Aukai Ligairi, of Fijian descent, was raised in Hawai'i and the Western United States. His filmmaking career started when he was a student at Utah Valley University making documentary films. He left school to follow an unraveling news story and was later honored with a Distinguished Alumni Award in the field of Journalism in 2012. Ligairi's debut feature-length documentary premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and his subsequent work as a Director, Producer, and Shooter has screened at festivals such as Sundance, DOCNYC, and the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival as well as limited theatrically, and on platforms such as HBO, Hulu, Amazon, and Netflix. Most recently, he was a Field Producer and Shooter on the BBC-produced LIFE BELOW ZERO: FIRST ALASKANS, currently airing on National Geographic Channel and streaming on Disney+.

Olivé - LIKE FATHER LIKE DAUGHTER

Olivé, a Tongan-American filmmaker who has worked most of her adult life near Tokyo, uses film as a tool to bring visibility to stories from her family's history and culture as well as Japan's. Her work shines light on the underexplored narratives of women and those living in a hyphenated experience to subvert expectations. A recent MFA Film graduate, Olivé has received several accolades while honing her craft. She won two Student Emmys for her debut documentary on systemic racism in Las Vegas, became a member of Soo Hugh's The Thousand Miles Project, and placed as a finalist in Final Draft's Big Break and the Humanitas competition--which recognizes film and television writers who explore the human condition in a nuanced, meaningful way. She recently worked on Apple TV's PACHINKO as a Japanese Language Consultant, and currently works in Tokyo's anime industry as a Manager for shows like ONE PIECE. Olivé aspires to tell intricate stories in scripted and unscripted formats that are not typically found in Western media. LIKE FATHER LIKE DAUGHTER is a documentary short film about Olivé, her father, and her Japanese ex-boyfriend who strive to heal their immigrant traumas while living together under one roof.

Glenda Tuaine - DEAF GIRL DANCING

Proud Cook Islands and European Vaine, Glenda Tuaine is a mother, creative entrepreneur, filmmaker producer, director and scriptwriter. Glenda resides in Rarotonga, Kuki Airani - Cook Islands and holds a Bachelor Arts in Anthropology and Women's Studies from Victoria University of Wellington. In 2002-04 Glenda was the first festival Artistic Director for the New Zealand Fringe festival and led the Te Papa Museum events team in the development of the Matariki Festival concepts and Exhibition extension programmes. In 2020 she was funded by Pacific Islanders in Communications to make her award-winning short documentary film on legendary master carver Mike Tavioni TAONGA, AN ARTIST ACTIVIST and in 2021 co-directed ATUI AKAOU, a TV feature Film on Cook Islands resilience at the time of Covid for Pasifika TV. Today, Glenda is currently working on a short film script with Kuki Airani's deaf community.

About Pacific Islanders in Communications (PIC):

Established in 1991, Pacific Islanders in Communications (PIC) is the only national public media organization that supports media content and its makers to work together to promote a deeper understanding of Pacific Islander history, culture and contemporary issues that define our communities. As part of the National Multicultural Alliance, PIC addresses the need for media content that reflects America's growing ethnic and cultural diversity by funding independently produced films and by providing over 200 hours of innovative content by and about Pacific Islanders to American public television including its flagship series *Pacific Heartbeat*. PIC defines "Pacific Islander" as one whose ancestors were the indigenous people of Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia and Australia. For more information about Pacific Islanders in Communications, visit www.piccom.org and follow us on social media: X: @PICpacific | facebook.com/piccom | Instagram: @picpacific

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