

The Fledgling Fund Grant Announcement - January 2010

The Fledgling Fund is excited to announce our newest cohort of creative media projects. We have focused on our core issue areas, and particularly how they all work together to reflect the reality of the social change atmosphere in the United States and beyond. We recognize that each of these issue areas (i.e. health, disabilities, girls empowerment, etc.) does not exist in an exclusive bubble and that we must think about them as a larger social web as they overlap and influence each other. We have chosen our grantees accordingly.

We are pleased to strengthen our work within the **Girls Empowerment and Health** areas with support for: *Body Typed, Faded, The Line*, Engaging Young Women as Health Activists, *All Of Me: A Story of Love, Loss and Last Resorts, Made in India, The Silent Partner: HIV in Marriage*, and *The Waiting Room*. We also have provided continued support for *Monica and David* to raise awareness and spur change for those living with **Intellectual Disabilities**.

We continue to see **Environmental Justice** as an area with great potential for change and the power of creative media to move individuals and communities toward action. To highlight and encourage individual actions, we awarded grants to *The Warrior of Qiugang* and IOBY. We also added to our portfolio of projects focused on energy with support for: *Cape Wind: The Fight for the Future of Power in America, Gasland, and Deep Down*. We believe all of these projects have the potential to ignite informed dialogue and debate about sustainable energy use and policy. **Immigration** also continues to be an area of great interest for us, and to that end, we provided support for *The Harvest* and *Basta: Ending Anti-Immigrant Hate in the Media*. We believe both of these projects can help put a human face on this incredibly complex issue.

An emerging area of interest is **Education** and we are pleased to provide support to three unique projects in this area: *To Be Heard, Speaking in Tongues* and *An American Promise*. Each of these projects has great potential to engage youth, families and educators as they strive to improve student achievement. The idea of empowering youth to make informed decisions about their futures was a key reason for our continued support for *The Recruiter* within our **War and its Aftermath** category. We also have expanded our work within the **Justice** arena with grants to Project Gabriel, *The Dhamma Brothers* and *No Tomorrow*. Taken together, these projects not only highlight complex issues within our justice system, but also offer possible solutions.

Finally, we provided seed funding for three **Special Projects** that fall outside of our focus areas, but that we think have great potential to address critical and timely issues: *World Without Walls, Hungry in America* and *The Mosque in Morgantown*. We also provided support for three projects that we believe are important to the social issue media field overall: the 10th Annual Media the Matters Festival, Firelight Media Diversity Producer's Lab and 1000 Voices Archive.

Congratulations to each of these 28 projects. This funding round was incredibly competitive with close to 400 letters of inquiry submitted and 90 projects invited to submit full applications. We looked at all projects within the context of our overall mission and our strategy of using media to advance change on key social justice issues. To that end, we focused on whether a project not only has the potential to raise awareness about a given issue, but also to engage individuals and communities in action that we believe will contribute to social change. We also considered how a particular project fits with and builds upon existing projects that we have funded and how our funding can play a strategic role to advance that project. The vast majority of our grants in the cycle will support community engagement initiatives for completed films with a smaller number of grants awarded to projects that seek to utilize innovative media strategies to achieve their social change goals. More information about each project is attached.

The Fledgling Fund
Summary of Grants- January 2010

Girls Empowerment and Health

***All of Me: A Story of Love, Loss and Last Resorts* - \$7,500**

Project Director: Alexandra Lescaze

The film follows a group of women, who have been friends, and fat, for years. Once passionately involved in Size Acceptance and the Big Beautiful Woman social community, now, one by one, they are choosing to have Lap Band or gastric bypass weight-loss surgery. With humor and poignancy, the film will illustrate that obesity is a much more complicated issue than we want to believe or that we might assume, given the “quick-fixes” marketed to us by the weight-loss industry. Fledgling’s funding will be used to enhance the interactive features of the project’s website in order to build and engage individuals and communities in the project as it evolves.

***Body Typed* - \$23,000**

Project Director: Jesse Epstein

Body Typed is a series of four short films that explore body image and self esteem in a humorous, fun, educational and engaging way. With Fledgling’s continued support the project will build on and deepen its strategic engagement work through the use of innovative mobile and web-based tools designed to appeal to and engage young men and women.

***The Silent Partner: HIV in Marriage* - \$10,000**

Project Director: Population Action International

With Fledgling support in 2009, Population Action International worked with local partners to organize screenings of *The Silent Partner: HIV in Marriage* – a film about the vulnerability of married women to HIV, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa – and community-wide discussions about gender, reproductive health and HIV. In 2010, it will broaden the reach of *The Silent Partner* and continue to collaborate with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in countries such as Rwanda, Tanzania and Malawi.

***Engaging Young Women as Women's Health Activists* - \$15,000**

Project Director: Judy Norsigian

Using *Absolutely Safe*, a film about breast implant safety and societal pressures to conform to narrow body image, *Our Bodies Ourselves* will seek to engage young college women in health advocacy efforts. Fledgling’s funding will allow them to host events on a range of college campuses in collaboration with local Women’s Studies and public health programs.

***Faded* - \$10,000**

Project Director: Janet McIntyre

Unflinching and incisive, *Faded* chronicles the lives of five girls between the ages of 13 and 24 as they battle varying degrees of binge drinking. Shot over the course of 3 1/2 years, the film presents the heartbreak and confusion of young women growing up under the allure of a booze culture. Fledgling’s funding will support post-production and will allow the filmmaker to solicit feedback and input to enhance the film’s audience engagement potential.

***The Line* - \$20,000**

Project Director: Nancy Schwartzman

This documentary film and its associated engagement campaign explores the intersection of sexual identity, power and violence. How do we negotiate our boundaries as sexually liberated women? How much are we desensitized to sexual violence? Through conversations with teenagers, educators, sex workers, the filmmaker, survivors of violence, the perpetrator of the filmmaker's assault, and lawmakers, this personal film explores "the grey area" and the elusive line of consent. This is the Fledgling Fund’s second grant to this project and will allow the filmmaker to build upon her recent success engaging young men and women.

***Made in India* - \$20,000**

Project Directors: Vaishali Sinha and Rebecca Haimowitz

A feature film about the “outsourcing” of surrogate mothers to India, *Made in India* tells this story with an intimate look at the lives of the surrogates and intended parents. Their goals include: amplifying the voices of the real people involved, questioning the system that makes women vulnerable to exploitation

while challenging assumptions of victimhood, informing policy-makers in formative stages of drafting surrogacy guidelines, and provoking an international dialogue on the complexities surrounding surrogacy which include issues like challenging notions of motherhood, commercialization of women's bodies, the cons of globalization and the lack of education/awareness on issues being raised by reproductive movements. Fledgling's funding will allow them to lay the foundation for a global audience engagement campaign.

The Waiting Room - \$20,000

Project Director: Peter Nicks

Told from the bottom up using a unique blend of locative media, the web and traditional documentary film, the project will directly engage the people stuck in the waiting room at Highland Hospital in Oakland, CA to reveal a community that is isolated and disconnected from technology, the debate about health care reform and the quality information that could improve their lives. This "documentary/social media hybrid" will not only tell their immediate story but also track their lives over time in an effort to examine how the most significant change to our health care policy in generations actually impacts people, neighborhoods and institutions. Fledgling's funding will help push the production of this innovative project forward.

Environmental Justice

The Warrior of Qiugang - \$15,000

Project Director: Thomas Lennon

This film is an intimate, multi-year examination of the citizens of one Chinese village working at great risk to end the poisoning of their land and water. The film follows them while they fight, and win. Fledgling's funding will support the first phase of their engagement campaign in China.

In Our Back Yards (IOBY) - \$25,000

Project Director: Erin Barnes

This project will use social media and a digital storytelling model to show the positive impact of hundreds of local environmental projects throughout the five boroughs. It will simultaneously build local support for these under-funded grassroots projects with monetary donations and volunteers, fostering citizen engagement with environmental problems and solutions in their own neighborhoods. Fledgling's funding will launch an innovative web-based video project that will enhance and build on the existing work of the organization.

Deep Down - \$20,000

Project Directors: Jennifer Gilomen and Sally Rubin

Through an intimate human story, dynamic social media tools, and strategic partnerships, *Deep Down's* goal is to connect millions of people to the land and people of Appalachia, joining and strengthening a growing social movement to end the practice of mountaintop removal mining, reduce energy consumption, and empower communities living in the shadows of extractive industries. Fledgling's support will allow this project reach small, rural, and low-income communities, particularly those dealing with some form of natural resource extraction.

Gasland - \$15,000

Project Director: Molly Gandour

The Halliburton-developed drilling technology of "fracking" or hydraulic fracturing unlocked a "Saudi Arabia of natural gas" just beneath us. The film shows us what comes up with "natural" gas, including toxic streams, dying livestock, flammable sinks, and a growing health crisis. Premiering at Sundance Film Festival in 2010, *Gasland* takes audiences on a cross-county odyssey with director Josh Fox to meet the rural residents on the front lines against "fracking." This grant will allow the project to launch a screening tour to reach diverse audiences and engage them in local action.

CAPE WIND: The Fight for the Future of Power in America - \$15,000

Project Director: Robbie Gemmel

A feature-length documentary about the high-stakes battle that rocked the political landscape in Massachusetts when a wind farm was proposed five miles off the coast of Cape Cod. The film translates the furor that enveloped Cape Cod and the Islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard into a story with national significance and critical implications for the future of America's new offshore wind industry. Fledgling provided a grant for post-production because we believe that this project has strong potential to engage communities around the issue of renewable energy.

Education and Youth Empowerment

To Be Heard- \$25,000

Project Director: Roland Legiardi-Laura

To Be Heard is a one-hour PBS documentary based on an innovative youth engagement and empowerment program in the Bronx. The project, Power Writing, works with disadvantaged youth, using their own poetry as a tool to inspire self-awareness, literacy and mastery of life skills. Most importantly, the work inspires young people to use their creativity to take responsibility for the world in which they live. This funding will allow the project to launch an innovative mobile phone based engagement strategy, Pocket Power Poetry, to engage and empower youth.

An American Promise - \$10,000

Project Director: Michèle Stephenson

The film follows two African American boys from the day they enter kindergarten in 1999 at the elite Dalton School, to their high school graduation in 2012. We witness the boys' earliest self-image issues, their struggles with dyslexia and hyperactivity amid a rigorous academic environment, and their high school divergence – one continues at Dalton, while another is asked to leave and enters Benjamin Banneker Academy, a middle-ranked Afrocentric Brooklyn high school. The film's longitudinal observations provide a rare glimpse into the social and emotional experiences that shape these boys into men. Fledgling's funding will provide some support for the design and development of an audience engagement campaign with the goals of raising awareness about the challenges faced by African American families educating young boys and mobilizing parents, students, educators and policymakers to look for new solutions to close the achievement gap.

Speaking in Tongues - \$20,000

Project Director: Marcia Jarmel

This film tells the remarkable story of four diverse kids challenging the conventional American wisdom that English is the only language that matters. The engagement campaign focuses on improving cross cultural competency and immigrant integration by helping communities create opportunities for children to become truly bilingual by learning a second language at school and by nurturing native languages at home. Fledgling's funding will support enhancements to their website and the launch of their engagement campaign.

Disability

Monica and David - \$25,000

Project Director: Ali Codina

Monica and David explores the marriage of two adults with Down syndrome and the family who strives to support their needs. Monica and David embody child-like spirits with adult desires; they are aware of their need for assistance, but also capable beyond expectations. Behind the couple's blissful love are two mothers who struggled against an intolerant world, and with this wedding, realize a dream—allowing their children a full life. The film pushes an audience to wonder why being a part of the outside world is such a challenge for Monica and David. Within the story, there is a need for parents to let go and allow them to be more independent; but there is also a reality to why they fear letting go. Fledgling's second grant to this project will help increase public awareness on the needs of adults with Down syndrome, and engage audiences in creating a place for these adults in our society.

Justice

No Tomorrow - \$20,000

Project Director: Roger Weisberg

No Tomorrow examines the murder of Risa Bejarano, the principle subject of an earlier documentary about teenagers leaving foster care, which became the centerpiece of a dramatic death penalty trial. *No Tomorrow* takes viewers inside this suspenseful death penalty trial and in so doing challenges their beliefs about capital punishment. By putting a dramatic human face on this complex issue, the film can function as a powerful catalyst for policy discussion, debate, and activism around the death penalty. Fledgling's funding will provide support to enhance the project's website.

Project Gabriel: Media in the Service of Social Justice - \$20,000

Project Director: Mara-Michelle Batlin

Project Gabriel utilizes multiple media platforms to reach across demographics and enhance the climate for significant justice policy reform, creating the political space for politicians to propose and advocate for reform. The campaign is timely, as it launches into a tail-wind created by recent judicial and economic mandates that will require policy-makers throughout the country to confront major flaws in sentencing laws which have led to unprecedented and untenable levels of incarceration, discriminatory practices, and the trans-generational institutionalization of crime and incarceration, all of which have led to the destruction of families and communities and have failed to improve public safety. Fledgling's grant will help this innovative project engage audiences in this critical issue.

The Dhamma Brothers - \$20,000

Project Director: Jenny Phillips

This film depicts a solution to one of the problems faced by U.S. prisons. The prisoners themselves are the film's central characters. As the film follows them on their journey inside, audiences respond to the prisoners as human beings with universal human problems. These stories inspire audiences with a desire to help, and to find ways to promote positive, solution-focused change in U.S. prisons. Fledgling is providing additional funding for this project to allow the project to build upon its past success and maximize the potential of its upcoming national broadcast.

Immigration

Basta: Ending Anti-Immigrant Hate in the Media - \$15,000

Project Director: Jenifer Fernandez Ancona

The overall goals of the project are to promote a positive narrative of the U.S. as a "Nation of Immigrants"; to tell the stories of those impacted by the broken immigration system and negative media climate around immigration; and to challenge anti-immigrant messaging and messengers in the mainstream media. Fledgling's funds will support the "Trail of Dreams" multimedia campaign which will follow four undocumented students who are walking from their home in Miami to Washington, DC to raise awareness about our country's broken immigration system.

The Harvest Facebook Game - \$10,000

Project Director: Susan MacLaury

Based on the documentary due out in 2010, *The Harvest*, this game seeks to: educate and engage children, adolescents, and adults both in and out of the classroom about the very serious challenges faced by American child migrant farm workers; raise college tuition monies for selected child workers; and promote awareness about existing and pending labor legislation. Fledgling's grant will provide key development funding for the game.

War and its Aftermath

The Recruiter - \$20,000

Project Director: Amelia Green-Dove

The Recruiter illuminates the poverty and desperation behind many young recruits' decision to join the Army and seeks to address these themes in the classroom by challenging young people to think critically about national service, the power of persuasion, and other issues directly pertinent to their futures. Fledgling's past support funded a multi-media website that showcases the film's curriculum, offers a peer-to-peer forum, has updated recruitment news, and highlights important information for people on their rights before and after enlistment. This additional funding will take our curriculum to places like Clinch, Ben Hill, and Turner Counties in Georgia, three counties with some of the highest rates of military recruitment as of 2008.

Special Projects

***The Mosque in Morgantown* - \$7,500**

Project Director: Brittany Huckabee

This film follows Asra Nomani, a Muslim writer and feminist activist, as she campaigns against what she sees as extremism in her hometown mosque - throwing the community into turmoil and raising questions that cut to the heart of American Islam. Through patient observation and nuanced character-based storytelling the film reveals the diversity within a community that is all too often seen as a monolith. Fledgling's grant will be used to plan an audience engagement campaign to spark dialogue among Muslim Americans on some of the most important issues it faces—including the place of women in the community, methods of creating social change and the interpretation of holy texts - and among non-Muslim audiences by demonstrating the universality of current conflicts within Islam.

***Hungry in America* - \$10,000**

Project Director: Kristi Jacobson

A feature documentary film slated for completion in Fall 2010, *Hungry in America* will shine a light on the issue of domestic hunger and the politics that cause 49 million Americans – including 17 million children – to go hungry, in order to galvanize viewers to demand policy change that will end hunger in the U.S. once and for all. This Fledgling grant will provide early seed funding for the design of a multi-platform audience engagement campaign.

***World without Walls* - \$10,000**

Project Director: Cinnamon Kennedy

Working with the UN Millennium Campaign, *World without Walls* will collect and edit short videos from 192 regular people in 192 nations illustrating their lives in light of the Millennium Development Goals. The project will leverage emerging and low cost technologies to raise awareness of the Millennium Development Goals, both in the developed and developing world, where participants and local broadcast partners will spread the word about the project. It also seeks to engage and connect the audience and content providers in interesting ways. Fledgling's grant will provide seed funding to help launch this innovative global video project.

Field Building

1000 Voices Archive Licensing Program - \$25,000

Project Director: Phoebe Eng

Co-Presented by The Fledgling Fund, the 1000 Voices Archive is a highly interactive website that taps the power of short video stories to build civic engagement and shape policy change. By putting a human face on today's most important policy issues, stories from the 1000 Voices Archive have helped to frame and inform conversations at state capitals, with beltway and state legislative staffers, with advocates at their annual conference plenaries, at fundraising house parties, on social networking sites, and at grassroots community meetings. Fledgling's most recent grant is designed to help move the project toward long-term sustainability.

Firelight Media Diversity Producer's Lab - \$10,000

Project Director: Mable Haddock

This project provides a professional development opportunity for a diverse group of producers, giving them infrastructure support to help them overcome many of the traditional barriers which tend to plague emerging and mid-level. Fledgling is pleased to support this project and hope it will bring new and important voices to social issue documentary film.

Media That Matters - \$10,000

Project Director: Katy Chevigny

A project of Arts Engine, the goal of the 10th annual Media That Matters collection is to bring short-form, social-issue media to diverse audiences across the globe both online and offline using a multiplatform approach.