

The Fledgling Fund January 2011 Grantees

A Small Act directed by Jennifer Arnold

Fledgling Grant: \$20K to support the “What’s Your Small Act?” audience engagement campaign

Film Synopsis. When Hilde Back sponsored a young, rural Kenyan student, she thought nothing of it. She certainly never expected to hear from him, but years later she does. Now a Harvard graduate and a Human Rights Lawyer for the United Nations, Chris Mburu decides to find the stranger that changed his life. Inspired by her generosity, he starts a scholarship program of his own and names it for his former benefactor. The film bears witness to the ripple effect a single action can create.

AXSmap.com produced by Jason DaSilva

Fledgling Grant: \$20K for outreach

Project Synopsis: AXS is a multifaceted project incorporating education through outreach with cutting-edge technology to engage the community in disability awareness. Through its mobile phone application, AXSmap, and website, it will change the way people with disabilities travel. AXSmap allows users to locate, in real time, businesses that have accessible services such as an elevator, ramp, or accessible washroom. AXSmap strives for a better world – accommodating, adapting, and updating for inclusion of people with a disability.

Brooklyn Castle directed by Katie Dellamaggiore

Fledgling Grant: \$15K to seed the film’s outreach and audience engagement campaign

Film Synopsis. In 10 years, Intermediate School 318 in Brooklyn NY has built the best junior high chess program in the nation, despite its consistently high level of student poverty. Brooklyn Castle makes an argument for why we need afterschool programs - by showing the positive effects afterschool chess has on I.S. 318 students.

Empty Handed: Responding to the Demand for Contraceptives produced by Pop. Action International

Fledgling Grant: \$10K to support outreach efforts in Kenya and Namibia

Film Synopsis. The film shows the ongoing challenge women face in accessing contraceptives and the devastating impact this has on women and their families. Developed with an accompanying advocacy guide, this film is a tool for advocates at all levels to prompt national and local conversations with elected officials, community leaders, health workers and civil society organizations.

Cotton Road directed by Laura Kissel

Fledgling Grant. \$10K to seed the film’s outreach and audience engagement campaign

Film Synopsis. It is human labor and consumption that connects us to one another, and yet we remain estranged from the very processes of production and the people who make our things. A travelogue for the 21st century, Cotton Road is a documentary about the workers who make possible cotton’s global flows and the industrial landscapes that are the backdrop to their experience. It promotes the idea that we need more transparency around production and consumption, and that we should be able to see the labor behind the things we buy.

Crime After Crime directed by Yoav Potash

Fledgling Grant: \$20K to support its outreach and audience engagement campaign

Film Synopsis. Crime After Crime tells the dramatic story of the successful battle to free Debbie Peagler, an incarcerated survivor of brutal domestic violence. Crime After Crime can help attract national awareness to the troubled intersection of domestic violence and criminal justice, and will advance much needed changes in this area across the country.

Deep Down directed by Sally Rubin and Jen Gilomen

Fledgling Grant: \$10K to support the audience engagement campaign

Film Synopsis. Deep Down puts a human face on the land and people most immediately affected by our nation’s voracious appetite for energy. The purpose of the project is three-fold: 1) to connect Americans to Appalachia, its mountains, and its people; 2) to raise awareness of mountaintop removal mining and support related policy; and 3) to inspire mindfulness around energy consumption and increase demand for alternative energy.

An American Drug War (Working Title) directed by Eugene Jarecki

Fledgling Grant: \$30K to support outreach and audience engagement

Film Synopsis. While recognizing the ravaging impact of drugs on users and the need for a serious national approach to this issue, this film investigates the tragic errors, shortcomings, and ultimately destructive consequences of American drug policy. In shedding light on the real and often painful consequences for the citizens trapped in cycles of joblessness, addiction and incarceration, it begins a dialogue on how to bring long-overdue change to the American War on Drugs and give publicity and momentum to efforts already underway.

Girl Model directed by Ashley Sabin

Fledgling Grant: \$10K to seed the outreach and audience engagement campaign

Film Synopsis: Girl Model follows U.S. and Russian model scouts who travel to remote Siberian villages to find thirteen to fifteen year old girls suitable for modeling jobs in Japan. This film brings viewers into a modeling industry rife with mirrors, images, facades, and uncertainty. Indeed, it is difficult to know who these young girls can trust and where the industry takes them when their eyes are covered.

Give Up Tomorrow directed by Michael Collins

Fledgling Grant: \$10K to support post-production

Film Synopsis: Give Up Tomorrow is a documentary feature film about a high-profile miscarriage of justice in the Philippines, and its unfolding international repercussions. Simultaneously a murder-mystery and an exposé of endemic corruption, the film looks intimately at the wrongful conviction of Paco Larrañaga, a teenager sentenced to death for the murder of two sisters. The story demonstrates the power of both tireless grassroots campaigning and hard hitting investigative media to trigger astonishing human rights outcomes at the policy level.

Inocente directed by Sean Fine and Andrea Nix Fine

Fledgling Grant: \$10K in seed funding for their audience engagement campaign

Film Synopsis: At 15, Inocente refuses to let her dream of becoming an artist be caged by her life as an undocumented immigrant, living without a home for the last nine years. Color is her personal revolution and its extraordinary sweep on her canvases creates a world that looks nothing like her own dark past - a past punctuated by a father deported for domestic abuse, an alcoholic and defeated mother of four who once took her daughter by the hand to jump off a bridge together, and an endless shuffle year after year through the city's overcrowded homeless shelters.

IOBY

Fledgling Grant: \$15K to support digital storytelling

Project Synopsis: ioby's digital storytelling program tells the collective story of the grassroots action in the nationally emerging urban environmental movement and inspires the public to become civically engaged in addressing the global environmental issues of our day.

Made In India directed by Vaishali Sinha and Rebecca Haimowitz

Fledgling Grant: \$6,500 for audience engagement

Film Synopsis: Made in India is a feature-length documentary film about the human experiences behind the phenomena of "outsourcing" surrogate mothers to India. The film shows the journey of an infertile American couple, an Indian surrogate and the reproductive outsourcing business that brings them together. Weaving together these personal stories within the context of a growing international industry, Made in India explores a complicated clash of families in crisis, reproductive technology, and choice from a global perspective.

Marmato directed by Mark Grieco

Fledgling Grant: \$10K to seed its outreach and audience engagement planning phase

Film Synopsis: Marmato is a documentary feature about a gold mining village in rural Colombia on the precipice of opportunity and destruction as Medoro Resources, a Canadian mining company, plans a massive regional investment. For five centuries these artisan miners have lived in the lush Andes mountains. This intimate portrait follows the villagers as they struggle to balance economic opportunity with their centuries old way of life.

Media the Matters produced by Arts Engine

Fledgling Grant: \$10K to support the film festival

Project Synopsis: The goal of the eleventh annual Media That Matters is to bring short-form, social-issue media to diverse audiences in the hundreds of thousands.

Mothers of Bedford directed by Jenifer McShane

Fledgling Grant: \$10K for post production and audience engagement

Film Synopsis: Mothers of Bedford looks at the lives of five women inside the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility specifically through the lens of motherhood. It is not just a film about women in prison and how they got there - it is also an exploration of what it means to be a mother. With help from the non-profit Children' Center inside the prison, incarcerated women are learning to nurture and strengthen their relationship with their children.

Rooftop Films

Fledgling Grant: \$20K to support Rooftop Films Screening Tour

Project Synopsis: By taking a new, issue-driven film outdoors to large crowds, Rooftop Films is able to inform and engage masses of people in ways that ordinary screenings are unable to do.

Shakespeare High directed by Alex Rotaru

Fledgling Grant: \$20K to support outreach and audience engagement work

Film Synopsis: Shakespeare High demonstrates that arts education, specifically drama in public schools, is not a luxury, but a necessity. The film follows several teens from all over Southern California, as they prepare and then compete in the 90th Annual DTASC (Drama Teachers Association of Southern California) Shakespeare Competition. All of these teens face challenges at home including poverty, gangs, drugs, lack of mentorship/parenting, and the trials and tribulations of adolescence. We see the impact that arts education has on their lives by providing community, focus, passion, communication skills, self-confidence, and self-knowledge.

Speaking in Tongues directed by Marcia Jarmel and Ken Schneider

Fledgling Grant: \$10K for outreach and audience engagement

Film Synopsis: At a time when 31 states have passed “English Only” laws, four pioneering families put their children in public schools where, from the first day of kindergarten, their teachers speak mostly Chinese or Spanish. Speaking in Tongues follows four diverse kids on a journey to become bilingual. This charming story will challenge you to rethink the skills that Americans need in the 21st century.

Split Estate directed by Debra Anderson

Fledgling Grant: \$10K for outreach and audience engagement

Film Synopsis: This compelling Emmy Award winning documentary shows the dirty side of hydraulic fracturing and natural gas, an energy source the industry touts as a clean alternative to fossil fuels. In the midst of a largely unregulated oil and gas drilling boom, the Split Estate Community Engagement Campaign educates communities about the true costs and long-term consequences of socially and environmentally irresponsible drilling, and empowers citizens to take action and work with policymakers to protect their civil liberties, health and property.

The Bully Project directed by Lee Hirsch

Fledgling Grant: \$15K for post production

Film Synopsis: The Bully Project is the first feature documentary film exploring "a year in the life" of bullying in the United States, with the goal of raising awareness and being a catalyst for positive change. This year, over 18 million American kids will be bullied at school, online, on the bus, at home, and through their cell phones, making it the most common form of violence young people in this country experience. The Bully Project is the first feature documentary film to show how we've all been affected by bullying, whether as victims, perpetrators or silent witnesses. From the first day of school through the last, The Bully Project will intimately explore the lives of a few of the many courageous kids and families bullying will affect this year.

The Line directed by Nancy Schwartzman

Fledgling Grant: \$15K for outreach and audience engagement

Film Synopsis: Told through a “sex-positive” lens, The Line is a 24 minute documentary about a young woman – the filmmaker- who is raped, but her story isn’t cut and dry. Not a “perfect victim,” the filmmaker confronts her attacker, recording the conversation with a hidden camera. Sex workers, survivors and activists discuss justice, accountability and today’s “rape culture.” The film asks the question: where is the line defining consent? The Line was completed in July 2009 and has been targeting its outreach and audience engagement campaign to college students and plans to work with fraternities and sororities prior to Spring Break 2011.

To Be Heard directed by Amy Sultan, Edwin Martinez, Roland Legiardi-Laura and Deborah Shaffer

Fledgling Grant: \$25K for audience engagement

Film Synopsis: To Be Heard is the story of three teens from the South Bronx whose struggle to change their lives begins when they start to write poetry. As writing and reciting become vehicles for their expressions of love, friendship, frustration, and hope, we watch these three youngsters emerge as accomplished self-aware artists, who use their creativity to alter their circumstances. Power Poetry is the centerpiece of the engagement campaign for To Be Heard. This pioneering use of mobile technology and vibrant new platform will host an interactive exchange of youth poetry. The goal of Power Poetry is to create a new space for at-risk youth to be heard - a youth run platform rooted in artistic creativity and socially conscious activism.

Up in Smoke directed by Adam Wakeling

Fledgling Grant: \$10K for audience engagement

Film Synopsis: Up in Smoke follows the work of Mike Hands, a British scientist who over 25 years has perfected a system of agroforestry which can recapture land rendered sterile by repeated slash and burn operations. The system enables organic production of subsistence and sale crops, with virtually no pesticides or fertilisers involved. For cropping purposes, it is carbon neutral, yet in an adapted form, it can also be used to regenerate rainforest, potentially acting as a massive carbon sponge across the globe. It is a simple technique with decades of scientific rigour and on the ground unbroken success, yet virtually no-one is aware of the problem and much less the solution.