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**FILM INDEPENDENT ANNOUNCES SIX FELLOWS SELECTED  
FOR FIFTH ANNUAL AMPLIFIER FELLOWSHIP**

**AWARDS \$180,000 IN CASH GRANTS**

LOS ANGELES (February 24, 2026) — Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Film Independent Spirit Awards, announced today the six Fellows and their projects selected for the fifth annual Amplifier Fellowship.

Each Amplifier Fellow will receive a \$30,000 unrestricted grant and participate in a 12-month program that provides creative and strategic support to advance a selected project, along with customized mentorship from industry advisors and a Film Independent Board member. Fellows will also receive professional coaching in partnership with Renee Freedman & Co, and financial and business advisement in partnership with The Jill James.

“We are thrilled to partner with Netflix for a fifth year to support this incredibly talented cohort of filmmakers across fiction and non-fiction in our 2026 Amplifier Fellowship and provide the crucial granting, resources and community for these artists to thrive as both artists and entrepreneurs,” said Angela C. Lee, Director of Artist Development at Film Independent.

Past Amplifier Fellows include J.M. Harper, whose film *Soul Patrol*, supported through the Fellowship in 2025, won the U.S. Documentary Directing Award at this year's Sundance Film Festival; Contessa Gayles, whose supported project *Songs from the Hole* won the 2025 Cinema Eye Honors Heterodox Award and is now available on Netflix; and David Fortune, named one of *Variety's* 2025 Top 10 Directors to Watch, whose supported project *Colorbook* debuted at the Tribeca Film Festival and received a 2025 NAACP Image Award nomination.

The 2026 Film Independent Amplifier Fellowship is supported by Founding Sponsor Netflix.

The 2026 Amplifier Fellows and their projects are:

**Akil Rashad Anderson, Writer/Director**

Akil Rashad Anderson is a Haitian American screenwriter and director from Miami. Months after receiving his MFA in Screenwriting from USC as a George Lucas Scholar, Anderson was hired as a staff writer on *Beacon 23*. He is a 2026 Film Independent Amplifier Fellow and an inaugural alumni of Rideback RISE. His proof of concept for *Mr. Negro* had its world premiere at Fantasia International Film Festival 2025. The son of a rap artist and grandson of a preacher, Anderson's work often centers on ambition, the underworld and the surreal. Outside of film, he's a beatmaker, birdwatcher and trombonist.

Project: *Mr. Negro* (Fiction Feature)

Logline: An elderly man discovers his deadbeat son transformed into an otherworldly creature, triggering a nightmarish odyssey in search of a cure for his ghastly baby boy.

**Aurora Brachman, Director/Producer**

Aurora Brachman is an Emmy-winning documentary filmmaker named one of *Filmmaker Magazine's* 25 New Faces of Independent. Her film, *Hold Me Close*, premiered at Sundance 2025. Her shorts *When the Revolution Doesn't Come*, *Club Quarantine*, *Joychild* and *Still Waters* were acquired by *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian* and POV. She co-produced Apple TV+'s *Girls State* (Sundance 2024) and A24's *Stephen Curry: Underrated* (Sundance 2023). Brachman is supported by The Sundance Institute, Firelight Media, Film Independent, Chicken & Egg, The Gotham and is one of Vimeo's Breakout Creators. She holds an MFA in Documentary Film from Stanford University.

Project: *Dear You* (Nonfiction Feature)

Logline: After escaping an abusive marriage and fleeing to the US, Grace James finds herself trapped in the US asylum system for 10 years.

### **Claire Brooks, Producer**

Claire Brooks is an independent film producer whose work sits at the intersection of storytelling, creative infrastructure and cultural policy. She served as Head of Production at Stephanie Allain's Homegrown Pictures, overseeing independent features including *Exhibiting Forgiveness*, the debut film by Titus Kaphar, which premiered in competition at Sundance. Brooks also established Netflix's Emerging Filmmaker Initiative, producing studio-level short films helmed by emerging voices. She is a 2025–2026 Women In Film Producing Fellow, holds an MFA in Creative Producing from Columbia University and a BA from NYU Gallatin and is the Executive Director of the Association of Film Commissioners International.

Project: *The Presser* (Fiction Feature)

Logline: When a small-town business owner rents his store to a local politician, he lands himself and his employees at the center of a media circus.

### **A. Sayeeda Moreno, Writer/Director**

A. Sayeeda Moreno is a director/screenwriter whose films draw from the mythology of the NYC metropolis where she was born and the bohemian cast of characters from her childhood home who shaped her worldview. Her character-driven body of work, filtered through her own body, boldly explores our humanity, resilience and love. Moreno is a Film Independent, Sundance Women in Finance and Tribeca All Access Fellow and SFFilm Society Hearst Grant recipient. She is developing the coming-of-age romance *Out in the Dunes* and memoir-based essay film *An Ambivalent Daughter*. Moreno earned her MFA from NYU Tisch and teaches at Bard College.

Project: *Out in the Dunes* (Fiction Feature)

Logline: Provincetown, 1992: In this summer romance, Soledad, a heartbroken romantic, starts a passionate affair with Jules, a butch lesbian artist who challenges her belief in love.

### **Philip Thompson, Writer/Director**

Philip Thompson is a Brooklyn-based filmmaker named one of *Filmmaker Magazine's* 25 New Faces of Independent Film in 2023 and a Sundance Ignite x Adobe and NYFF Artists Academy Fellow in 2024. His work explores popular media's influence on culture, focusing on the emotional impact of media consumption and the one-sided relationship between viewers and image subjects. His films, *Living Reality* and *I'm At Home*, have

screened at festivals such as Palm Springs, Atlanta, Indie Memphis, New Orleans and Chicago Critics, amongst others. His debut feature, *Dance Monkey Dance*, was recently selected for the Sundance Screenwriters Lab.

Project: *Dance Monkey Dance* (Fiction Feature)

Logline: A fictional found-footage documentary tracing a Black comedian whose success catering to white audiences erodes his identity and reveals fame as a form of control.

### **Thanh Tran, Director/Producer**

Thanh Tran is an Amerasian Vietnamese and Black filmmaker, music artist and community organizer. He co-founded *Uncuffed*, an award-winning podcast amplifying incarcerated voices, and ForwardThis Productions, one of the first film collectives led entirely by incarcerated people. He is co-founder of New Krma Media, a worker-owned social enterprise supporting system-impacted artists through music, film and activism. He directs *Finding Má*, a feature-length documentary following his family's search for their unhoused mother after decades of separation. He also serves as Program Manager for the Returning Filmmaker Fellowship and Board Member of the Andrus Family Foundation.

Project: *Finding Má* (Nonfiction Feature)

Logline: After decades apart, an Amerasian Vietnamese and Black family separated by foster care and prison reunite to heal, beginning with searching for their unhoused mother.

The 2026 Film Independent Amplifier Fellowship is supported by Founding Sponsor Netflix and its Fund for Creative Equity. The studio is behind acclaimed projects such as *Descendant*, *When They See Us*, *Mudbound* and *Becoming*.

Film Independent Artist Development programs promote unique, independent voices by helping filmmakers create and advance new work through Project Involve, Filmmaker Labs (Episodic Directing, Documentary Story Lab, Documentary Producing Lab, Episodic, Fiction Producing and Screenwriting), Fast Track Film Finance Market, Fiscal Sponsorship, Amplifier Fellowship, and the Imaginar Producers Residency, as well as through Grants and Awards that provide over one million dollars annually to visual storytellers.

For more information on any of the Labs or the projects that have been developed through Artist Development, please contact [artistdevelopment@filmindependent.org](mailto:artistdevelopment@filmindependent.org).

## **ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT**

For over 40 years, Film Independent has helped filmmakers get their projects made and seen. The nonprofit organization's core mission is to champion creative independence in visual storytelling in all its forms and foster a culture of inclusion, in support of a global community of artists and audiences who embody diversity, innovation, curiosity and uniqueness of vision.

In addition to producing the [Film Independent Spirit Awards](#), the organization supports creative professionals with [Artist Development](#) programs, grants and labs. Signature mentorship program [Project Involve](#) fosters the careers of talented filmmakers from underrepresented communities. Weekly Education events and workshops equip filmmakers of all ages and experience levels with tools and resources. International programs provide cultural exchanges and career-building opportunities for film professionals around the world. And year-round screening series [Film Independent Presents](#) offers a robust program of unique cinematic experiences, including screenings, conversations, Live Reads and Bring the Noise musical events.

For more information or to become a Member, visit [filmindependent.org](http://filmindependent.org).

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