

# COLOR CONGRESS

2023  
IMPACT  
REPORT





Dear Colleagues,

We launched the Color Congress in 2022 to resource, support and connect organizations whose work we believe is vital. As we embarked on this work, we were sometimes met with questions about the ecosystem we aimed to serve: *How do they support documentary filmmaking? Where are they located? Who do they serve?* And, the most frequent question we encountered: *Why have we never heard of them?*

Two years and 93 members later, those answers have come into focus.

Our members fund Kānaka Maoli filmmakers in Oahu and program Palestinian films in San Francisco. They teach archival techniques in the Rio Grande Valley and employ formerly incarcerated folks to lead impact campaigns focused on criminal justice reform. They mount solar screenings in San Juan and bring women and non-binary filmmakers to the Sundance Film Festival. They host work-in-progress feedback sessions for Desi filmmakers and bring censored Chinese films to U.S. audiences. And so much more!

Two years ago these organizations were largely disconnected from one another, operating in silos based on the communities or regions they serve or their roles in the field. Today they are connected and form a distinct and powerful ecosystem. What we are learning is that our members are deeply oriented towards the filmmakers and communities they serve, at times more than to the documentary field they operate within. And while their efforts may fly under the industry radar, they bring new voices, methodologies, resources, and audiences to documentary filmmaking.

In a moment of political disenfranchisement and division, our members are strengthening communities of color by creating spaces for intellectual inquiry, civic engagement, and healing. They strengthen our nation by building new narrative pathways for a more just future.

It is an honor to champion their work.

In community,

Sahar Driver & Sonya Childress  
Co-Directors

→ FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:  
ANDREA AYALA, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSOCIATE  
SAHAR DRIVER, CO-FOUNDER + CO-DIRECTOR  
SONYA CHILDRESS, CO-FOUNDER + CO-DIRECTOR

# A POWERFUL ECOSYSTEM





# A DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP

As an ecosystem-builder, **COLOR CONGRESS** offers free membership to organizations based in the United States and U.S. islands that support filmmakers and leaders of color in the documentary field, or that nurture audiences of color for documentaries. Members have access to monthly closed-door meetups and technical assistance support, and the ability to direct a member-led fund that resources collective problem-solving and field interventions.

- African American Women in Cinema
- African Film Festival, Inc. (AFF)
- American Documentary - POV
- Arab Film and Media Institute
- Arkansas Soul Media
- Asian American Documentary Network (A-Doc)
- Association of Puerto Rican Documentary Filmmakers (ADocPR)
- Austin Asian American Film Festival
- AXS Lab
- Beyond Inclusion
- BIPOC Doc Editors
- Bitchitra Collective: Indian Women in Documentary
- Black Association of Documentary Filmmakers West (BADWEST)
- Black Documentary Collective
- Black Film Space
- Black Haven
- Black Muslim Girl Fly (Audaz Entertainment)
- Black Public Media
- BlackStar Projects
- Brown Girls Doc Mafia
- Center for Asian American Media (CAAM)
- Center for Cultural Power - CCP
- Chicana Directors Initiative
- Cine Solar Rodante / Defend Puerto Rico
- Cinema Tropical
- Comfrey Films
- DC Asian Pacific American Film Festival
- Define American
- Detroit Narrative Agency
- dGenerate Films
- Distribution Advocates
- Diverse Filmmakers Alliance
- Documentary Accountability Working Group (DAWG)
- Educational Video Center
- Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
- ENTRE Film Center and Archive
- Femme Frontera
- Firelight Media
- Full Spectrum Features NFP
- Handy Foundation
- Harlem Film House
- Hayti Heritage Film Festival
- IllumiNative
- Imagine This Women's Film Festival
- iMPACT LENS
- KOSINIMA
- Laredo Film Society
- Latin Reel
- Latino Public Broadcasting
- Lede New Orleans
- Level Ground
- Liberating Cinema
- Life Media Projects
- Mama.Film
- Mezcla Media Collective
- MOM Film Festival
- Native Lens
- New Negress Film Society
- No Evil Eye Cinema
- Ōlelo Community Media
- Pacific Islanders in Communication
- PATOIS Film Collective
- Philadelphia Latino Film Festival of Culture Trust
- Pillars Fund
- Plenty of Pie Production Accelerator
- Prismatic Ground
- Programmers of Color Collective (POC2)
- Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project (QWOCMAP)
- Rada Studio/ Rada Collaborative
- Re-Present Media
- Reality Poets (OPEN DOORS)
- Represent Justice
- Restoring the Future
- Roxbury Film Festival
- Scribe Video Center
- Second Chance Studios
- SF Urban Film Fest
- SIFTMedia 215 Collective
- Sisters in Cinema
- SoulCenter
- Storyline Partners
- Tasveer
- The Luminal Theater
- The Maysles Documentary Center
- Third Horizon Film Festival
- Third World Newsreel
- Time Out of Joint (CultureWorks Ltd)
- Undocumented Filmmakers Collective
- Urban Scholar Film Academy
- Vision Maker Media
- Visual Communications
- Watsonville Film Festival
- Youth FX / Next Doc

IN TWO YEARS THE  
MEMBERSHIP HAS GROWN TO  
90+ ORGANIZATIONS.

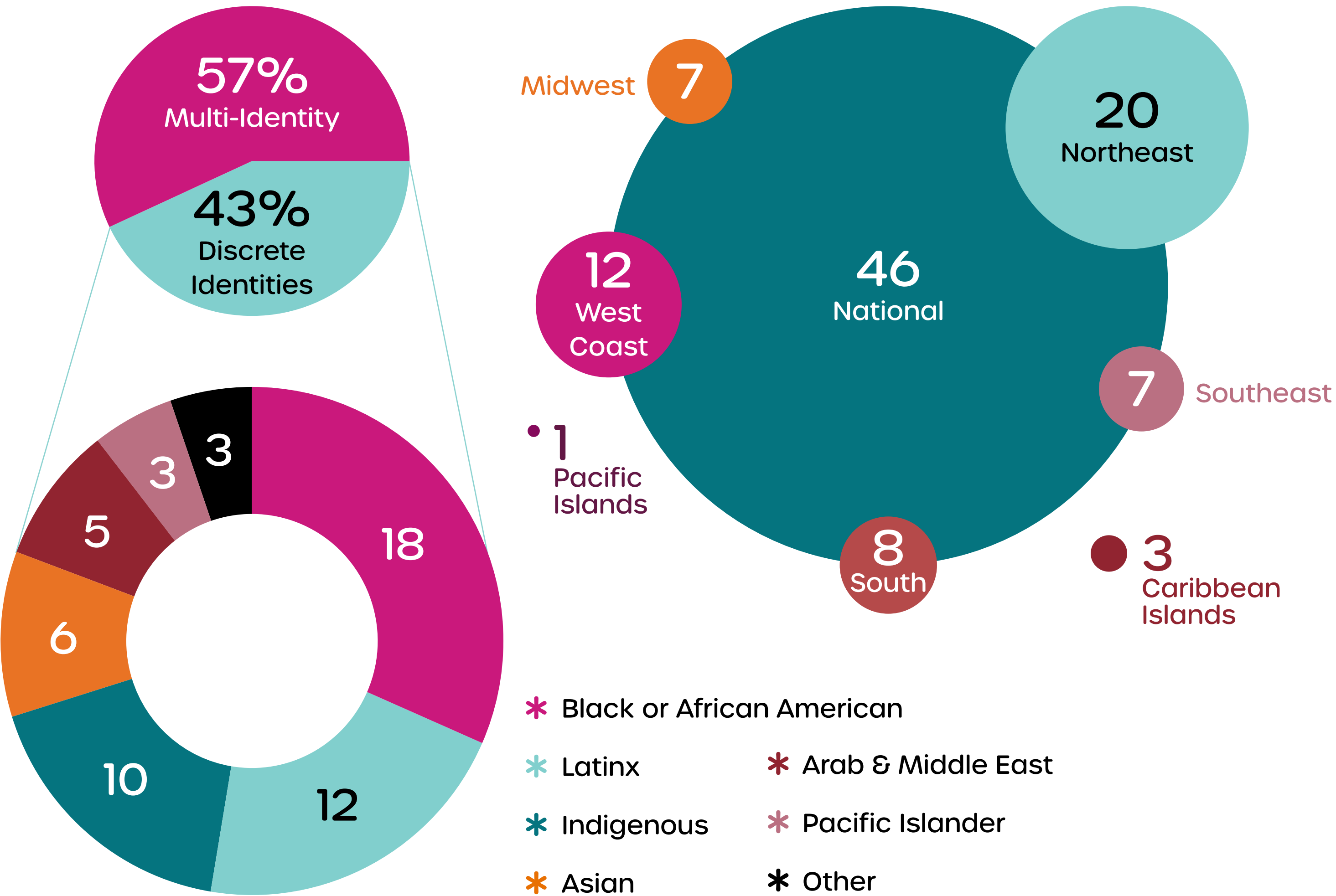


# GEOGRAPHIC AND RACIAL IDENTITIES

The majority of our members serve multiple identity communities while just under half of our members focus on specific identities.

Just under a half of our members have national reach and the rest serve specific regions.

Our membership now covers all major regions and territories, with the exception of Alaska, US Virgin Islands, Guam, Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands. We are working to increase our representation among organizations serving Pasifika and Caribbean communities and their diasporas.



← LEADERS OF MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS CINE SOLAR RODANTE, LA ASOCIACIÓN DE DOCUMENTALISTAS DE PUERTO RICO, AND RUTA CRÍTICA ON COLOR CONGRESS HOSTED PANEL TITLED, “CON HACHA Y MACHETE: FORGING NEW PATHS OF CINEMATIC INDEPENDENCE AND CREATIVE DISTRIBUTION,” AT THE GRANTMAKERS IN THE ARTS CONFERENCE IN SAN JUAN.



# MOVING TOGETHER

INCREASING COLLABORATION  
AMONG OUR MEMBERS  
DEMONSTRATES THE POWER  
AND POTENTIAL OF THEIR  
COLLECTIVE ACTION.



## Palestinian Voices

FREE FILMS ABOUT PALESTINE ONLINE  
AND IN-PERSON THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER

[arabfilm.us/palestine](https://arabfilm.us/palestine)



This year, member organizations that serve the border region - ENTRE Film Center, and Femme Frontera, in partnership with Firelight Media - collaborated for a panel discussion, **FILMING BORDERS & BREAKING BARRIERS**, with filmmakers and policy experts from the U.S.-Mexico border, discussing the logistics and difficulties of filming along borders and how it influences how they shape, challenge, and reclaim border narratives.

Across the country, the Third Horizon Film Festival, Luminal Theater and Cinema Tropical partnered on a **CARIBBEAN FILM SERIES** at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, which spotlights films made by Caribbean filmmakers that highlight the richness, uniqueness, and viability of Caribbean cinema in Brooklyn, home to the largest population of Caribbean nationals in the United States.

And when the Arab Film & Media Institute informed the membership of the difficult decision to postpone their annual festival due to the events in Gaza, many of our members rallied to offer support by hosting in-person screenings of films from **PALESTINIAN VOICES** - from Scribe Film Center, BlackStar and SIFT Media in Philadelphia, Mezcla Media Collective in Chicago, Maysles and Third World Newsreel in New York. Many more members stepped up to co-host virtual screenings including Restoring the Future, Bichitra Collective, Visual Communications, Patois, Third Horizon, Black Documentary Collective, Rada, Diverse Filmmakers Alliance, Firelight, Educational Video Center, SF Urban Film Festival, DC APA Film Festival, Black Muslim Girl Fly, QWOCMAP, AdocPR, A-Doc, SoulCenter and ENTRE Film Center.





Director, Rodrigo Reyes ↓  
Film, *Sansón and Me*  
Participant, as represented  
by an actor: Sansón Noe  
Andrade ↗

Key Distributor:

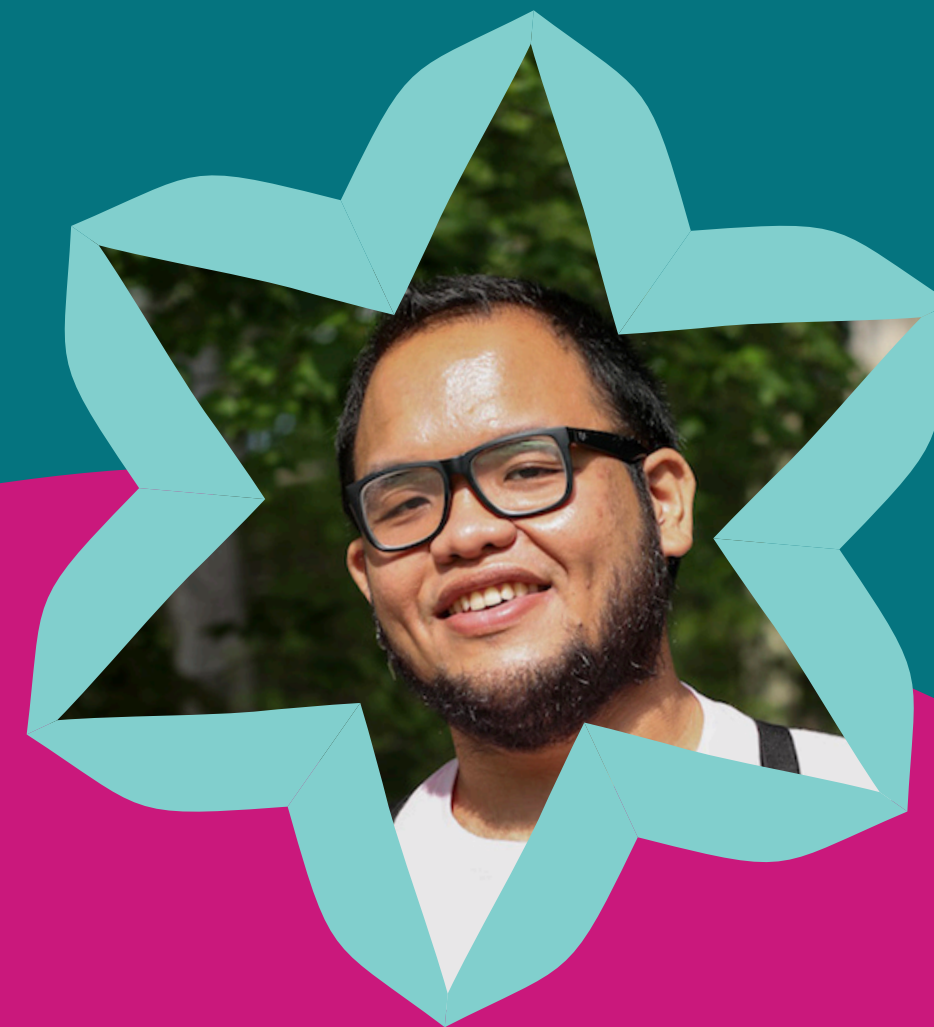


Key Impact Partner:



## OUR ART, OUR STORIES

In June, we hosted our first **ANNUAL ARTS SHOWCASE**, a virtual event featuring two documentary filmmakers, their participants and four Congress member organizations central to the filmmaker's work. The event demonstrated the powerful network of organizations that nurture talented filmmakers and ensure their films reach diverse audiences, impact the people at the center of the film, and reframe the conversation on social issues.



Director, Set Hernandez ↖  
Film, *unseen*  
Participant, Pedro ↑

Key Distributor: **AXS LAB INC.**

Key Impact Partner: 



Thought-provoking  
Organized  
Powerful  
Pride  
Kinship  
Transformative



# STRENGTHENING THE FIELD

Color Congress creates a container for connection and collaboration through online and in-person events, and through a member-led field building fund.

In September, representatives from over 74 member organizations gathered in person in Atlanta and online for our inaugural **NATIONAL CONVENING**. Our goal: to deepen understanding and trust, and to determine what we want to do together to strengthen the power of the documentary field and this ecosystem. We were grounded with keynote talks from leaders within our membership - Karim Ahmad of Restoring the Future, Favianna Rodriguez of the Center for Cultural Power, Dr. Kameelah Mu'min Rashad Oseguera of the Documentary Accountability Working Group, and Karin Chien from Distribution Advocates. We did more than create the conditions for a positive experience for our members (as 90% indicated in post-event surveys), we built trust, we got organized, and we may have even shifted local weather patterns!

Connected  
Informative  
Inspiring  
Intentionality  
Grounded  
Beautiful

Magical  
Generative  
Supportive  
**COMMUNITY**  
Motivating  
Validating  
Collaborative  
Enlightening  
**AFFIRMING**  
Hopeful  
Action-oriented  
Challenging





**SALWA ABDUSSABUR,  
BLACK HAVEN**

// Being [at the National Convening] has really inspired me. I saw my past, present and future self here. I'm privileged that my introduction to this industry has been meeting other Muslim filmmakers and meeting Black women who have been producers for 20+ years. To meet [them] in community and collectivism...I think I was meant to meet [them] to see myself. This is something that will definitely be a milestone in my life and my career and my relationship to storytelling as a creative. //

// It transformed our intentions to continue the work we do and to see that we are not alone and that we have power in numbers. It was affirming to see this critical mass of counter-cultural thinkers, doers and collaborators working to create new worlds in which documentary filmmakers can disrupt the status quo, affect social change and thrive rather than survive. //

**BRENDA AVILA-HANNA,  
WATSONVILLE FILM FESTIVAL**



More than a simple retreat, our members spent time debating, refining and narrowing down ideas for field interventions that they want to invest their time and energy in shaping. We embarked on a collective decision-making process that has resulted in ideas they believe are the most viable and the highest priority to consider for funding in 2024.

#### **OUR MEMBERS ARE SHAPING THE FOLLOWING INTERVENTIONS:**

- Forming a collective distribution and sales infrastructure that benefits the entire membership
- Creating a shared marketing infrastructure for films supported by the membership
- Building the infrastructure to support funding and grants management, including shared fundraising
- Leading an impact communications strategy to reframe the narrative about the collective value of members' work
- Purchasing a retreat space that member organizations can collectively use
- Ensuring a way for member organizations to gain access to and support for accessibility services

In January 2024 our members will vote on the first intervention they want to embark on together. The intervention with the most votes will be implemented using resources from our 2024 Field Building Fund.





# FIELD LEADERSHIP

## CONGRESS STAFF HAVE SPOKEN IN INDUSTRY PANELS AT

- Media Impact Funders
- Elevate Prize: Make Good Famous
- Grantmakers in the Arts
- European Film Market
- Vancouver Queer Film Festival

## ACCOLADES

- Sahar Driver invited to Picture Motion Advisory Board
- Sonya Childress inducted into Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences



# LOOKING FORWARD

In 2024, Color Congress will begin implementation on a field intervention directed by our members through a **\$300K FIELD BUILDING FUND**. We will gather our members in regional meetups as we prepare for our Biennial National Convening in 2025.

We will continue to resource our members' sustainability needs through another round of **UNRESTRICTED GRANTS TOTALING \$1.35 MILLION**, and we will raise new resources to offer ongoing technical assistance in fundraising strategy, strategic planning, and impact communications.

We will begin the process to transition from a fiscally-sponsored organization to an independent 501c3 organization. This will include expanding our staff and developing a fiduciary board of directors.





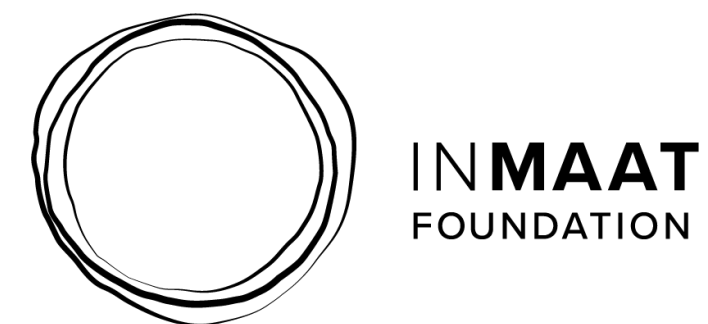
# OUR CHAMPIONS



## OUR FOUNDING FUNDERS



## OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY



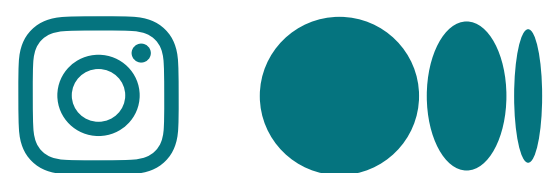
## FRIENDS OF COLOR CONGRESS

American Documentary, Inc. - B J Berliner - Bay Area Video Coalition - Brown Girls Doc Mafia - Linda Blackaby - Regan Brashear - Chicago Media Project - Consequential - Early Bird Films - ITVS - Jessica Edwards - Sean Flynn - The Harnisch Foundation - Rahi Hasan - Christopher Head - Cassandra Herrman - Nikki Heyman - Yolanda Joe - Susan Margolin - Justine Nagan - Molly O'brien - Participant - Peace is Loud - Rick Pérez - Shaady Salehi - Justin Sherwood - Sundance Institute - Naomi Walker



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