

**Press/Media Contact:**  
Shelley Spicer, California Film Institute  
Director of Publicity & Media Relations  
415-526-5845 (o) | 415-269-5808 (m) | [sspicer@cafilm.org](mailto:sspicer@cafilm.org)  
(The above number and email are not for publication)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE CALIFORNIA FILM INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES  
DOCPITCH AWARDS TOTALING \$100,000  
TO DOCUMENTARY FILMS CURRENTLY IN DEVELOPMENT**

**CHEWED GUM WINS DOCPITCH \$45,000 AUDIENCE AWARD  
STANDING ABOVE THE CLOUDS WINS DOCPITCH \$40,000 INDUSTRY AWARD**



*Chewed Gum*, director Alana Maiello



*Standing Above the Clouds*, director Jalena Keane-Lee



*Brief Tender Light*, director Arthur Musah



*Brigidy Bram*, directors Kareem Mortimer, Laura Gamse



*SheChange*, director Sachi Cunningham

SAN RAFAEL, CA (May 11, 2022) - DocLands Documentary Film Festival, shining a spotlight on independent documentary filmmakers, closed with the live online announcement of four juried industry awards totaling \$55,000 and a \$45,000 Audience Award. The awards were distributed Wednesday morning, May 11, 2022, through the CFI fundraising initiative **DocPitch**, designed to aid filmmakers in completing their feature documentary film projects currently in production/development, with support from the Nancy P. & Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, Project No. 9, and Resonance Philanthropies.

**DocPitch Award Recipients**

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>\$45,000</b> Audience Award | <b><i>Chewed Gum</i></b> , director Alana Maiello                   |
| <b>\$40,000</b> Industry Award | <b><i>Standing Above the Clouds</i></b> , director Jalena Keane-Lee |
| <b>\$5,000</b> Industry Award  | <b><i>Brief Tender Light</i></b> , director Arthur Musah            |
| <b>\$5,000</b> Industry Award  | <b><i>Brigidy Bram</i></b> , directors Kareem Mortimer, Laura Gamse |
| <b>\$5,000</b> Industry Award  | <b><i>SheChange</i></b> , director Sachi Cunningham                 |

"It's not often there's something positive to say about the pandemic, but it was certainly the driving force behind taking DocPitch into a virtual space for the first time in 2020. And although it's thrilling for the projects to be pitched in-person in the theatre, a virtual DocPitch is here to stay because in cyberspace there is no 'home team' and none of the filmmakers are required to have the ability to travel physically or financially," commented Joni Cooper, DocLands Director of Programming. "Taking DocPitch online has rendered both pitching and voting more accessible and equitable in terms of the Audience Award - for filmmakers, their teams, and the myriad of their supporters. It also allows the film projects to be discovered by so many more potential advocates."

After the audience votes were carefully verified and tallied, we're delighted to announce that the \$45,000 Audience Award went to director Alana Maiello for her explosive project **Chewed Gum**.

"The Chewed Gum team is incredibly grateful, humbled, and honored by the incredible outpouring of support our film received with DocPitch at DocLands!" commented Alana Maiello, Director *Chewed Gum*. "This experience empowered our filmmaking team to connect with our audience all around the world, for the very first time. DocPitch was the first time we ever made our film public, and the momentum, support, and hundreds of survivors and supporters who reached out to us during this process has entirely changed the course of our film," Maiello continued. "Our team is filled with gratitude to Joni Cooper, to DocLands and the California Film Institute, to the incredible filmmakers in our DocPitch cohort, and to the survivors and supporters who reached out to share their stories and experiences during the voting. We are thrilled to be connecting with the audience for Chewed Gum, excited to continue the momentum towards finishing and releasing our film. Joni made that possible."

An industry jury comprised of Paola Mottura of the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Fund, Jeffrey Winter of The Film Collaborative, and Chi-hui Yang of Ford Foundation presented the \$40,000 Industry Award to director Jalena Keane-Lee for her intergenerational project **Standing Above the Clouds**. The remaining three finalists each receive \$5,000, with all funds going toward the continued development and production of the films.

*The DocPitch Industry Jury would like to congratulate all the filmmakers for presenting us with a diverse and ambitious set of projects that reflect the true spirit of exploration of provocative subjects, as well as particular emphasis on creating new visual language to translate themes into cinematic art.*

*The jury was moved by this beautiful and inspiring collective pitch. We were impressed by how each member of the core creative team effectively highlighted not only the importance of the issues in question, characters, storyline, and artistic approach; but also the core values of the team, from self-care to community care, stressing how these in fact reflect the core values of the indigenous movement itself.*

*We were drawn to the nuanced exploration of intergenerational activism, delving into what it means to stand for your land, culture, and identity in modern day Hawai'i and beyond. We were excited to hear how their cinematic language combines intimacy with spaciousness reflecting how the personal is political and vice-versa—and elegantly braids complex themes of family, land stewardship, and indigenous traditions together into a powerful, unified story that will move and mobilize audiences across the country and around the globe.*

**Chewed Gum – Audience Award \$45,000**

Director Alana Maiello

*15 years after her rape drove her to seek solace in the Mormon Church, filmmaker Alana Maiello returns to Utah to confront her unresolved trauma and to connect with other LDS sexual violence survivors. Discovering a buried epidemic of sexual violence in Utah, she experiences the power of religion to suppress personal truth, and faces her own history in the community she left behind.*

**Standing Above the Clouds – Industry Award \$40,000**

Director Jalena Keane-Lee

*When the world's largest telescope is set to be built on their sacred mountain, Mauna Kea, three Native Hawaiian families dedicate their lives to defending it. Through the lens of mothers and daughters, Standing Above the Clouds explores intergenerational healing and the social and emotional labor of retaining ancient ceremonies while putting your body on the line to protect a sacred mountain.*

**Local Bay Area Connection:** Filmmaker Jalena Keane-Lee is the co-founder of Breaktide Productions, an all women of color video production company. She is based in the East Bay, Berkeley.

**Brief Tender Light – Industry Award \$5,000**

Director Arthur Musah

*At America's elite MIT, four African students strive to graduate into agents of change for their home countries. But what changes come from living in two different worlds?*

**Brigidy Bram – Industry Award \$5,000**

Directors Kareem Mortimer, Laura Gamse

*In this wild rag-to-riches tale circling psychosis and genius, the story of prolific painter Kendal Hanna reveals a case study of how we institutionalize difference. Brigidy Bram uncovers the forces threatening to erase Hanna's memory, his work, and his name from history.*

**SheChange – Industry Award \$5,000**

Director Sachi Cunningham

SheChange is an intimate journey with four of the best female big wave surfers in the world as they fight for equal access and equal pay in one of the most dangerous sports on earth. Their surprising, history-making victory is only the beginning of what becomes their ultimate mission: equity for women in the world of professional sports - and beyond.

**Local Bay Area Connection:** Filmmaker Sachi Cunningham is based in SF and is a Professor of Multimedia Journalism at San Francisco State University; Executive Producer Louie Psihoyos is based in Sausalito, California.

**About DOCLANDS**

Presented by the California Film Institute, DocLands Documentary Film Festival brings compelling stories and the provocative insights behind them to Marin County, California. Expanding upon the exchange of ideas and inspiration through public screenings and engaged conversations, DocLands aims to bring diverse communities together for dialogue and build an active, inclusive, and fully supportive community around documentary film. Dedicated to initiating connections and partnerships that will illuminate and invigorate the business and art of non-fiction filmmakers.

**DOCLANDS Film Strands**

- **Art of Impact** engages and sparks action by sharing stories that open our eyes to the global community and its disparate cultures, politics, personal narratives, and biographies.
- **The Great Outdoors** transports us outside to truly appreciate, explore, and ultimately compel us to save and conserve our environment and the wilds of our precious planet.
- **WonderLands** lifts our spirits through stories of joy, wonder, and possibility.

**About California Film Institute**

The California Film Institute (CFI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to celebrating and promoting film as art and education with a diverse series of annual programs, including the presentation of the internationally acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival, celebrating its 45th year in 2022 and the documentary film festival DocLands; building the next generation of young filmmakers and audiences through CFI Education, featuring a broad range of activities, screenings, Q&A sessions, and seminars with top international and local filmmakers and industry professionals, as well as a rich program of classes and hands-on-workshops for all Bay Area students and lifetime learners. Year-round, CFI acts as a film-centric town hall with a varied calendar of programming at the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, one of the leading non-profit independent theaters in the U.S., celebrating and promoting the art of storytelling through film. CFI is also the majority owner of the Sequoia Theater in Mill Valley, California. CFI Releasing, a national non-profit film distribution initiative, enables filmmakers and sales agents to collaborate with U.S. independent exhibitors, giving nationwide audiences access to quality independent film and promoting this work as a valuable artistic and educational medium conveying different visions, viewpoints, and cultural perspectives. CFI relies on the generosity of its community to sustain these core programs. The invaluable support of our members, sponsors, foundations, and individual donors ensures our continued success. For more information, visit [cafilm.org](http://cafilm.org).

**Supporters | DocPitch**

CFI is proud to acknowledge the Nancy P. and Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, Project No. 9, Jennifer Coslett MacCready, Vickie Soulier, Bellam Self Storage and Boxes, Jackson Square Partners, Jim Boyce Trust and Kris Otis, Make it Better Media, Community Action Marin, AC San Rafael Marriott, and the Academy of Integrated Humanities and New Media for their generous support of DOCLANDS. We are also fortunate to have the contributions of the following DocPitch supporters Nancy P. & Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation, Project No. 9, Resonance Philanthropies, and Jackson Square Partners.

###

**Social Media**

#Doclands

Twitter: @doc\_lands

Instagram: @doclands

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/doclands>