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Press Contact: Betsy Leonard

Email: betsyleonard@kartemquin.org

Other Inquires: aapivoicesfund@kartemquin.org

THREE PROJECTS ANNOUNCED FOR THE THIRD ROUND OF THE ZHAO-CHEN FAMILY AAPI VOICES FUND AT KARTEMQUIN FILMS

CHICAGO, IL [1/27/2026] - Kartemquin Films is pleased to announce the three new projects supported by the [Zhao-Chen Family AAPI Voices Fund](#): **UMMA'S CUT**, dir. **Kaylee Kim**; **HO'OKA'AWALE_ 疏离 (SHŪLÍ)**, dir. **Marisa Woo Grattan**; **UNTITLED TEAACH ACT DOCUMENTARY**, dir. **Shuling Yong**. One of the filmmakers is an alumni of Kartemquin's acclaimed Diverse Voices in Documentary program.

This is the third round of the fund designed to invest funds and critical support in documentary films that center AAPI experiences and deepen audiences' understanding of the complexity and diversity of the AAPI communities in the US. Previous fellows include:

Co-Production Awardees: Joua Lee Grande, dir. *Spirited*; Jiayan "Jenny" Shi, dir. *The Scientist*; Jason Rhee, dir. *Ej Lee Documentary*; Kimberlee Bassford, dir. *Iris Chang: Power of One*

Seed Funding Awardees: Quyen Nguyen-Le, dir. *Nobuko Miyamoto: A Song in Movement*; Emily Strong dir. *Tasting Heritage*; Dave Yim, dir. *Always Chinatown (aka Chinatown Futures)*

In this round, fellows will receive \$40,000 co-production awards towards production of a short documentary, support from a supervising producer, and mentorship through the award-winning Kartemquin collaborative production model.

"It is an incredible honor to be selected for this grant—this funding allows us to properly bring this story to audiences and give it the spotlight it deserves. Women of color, especially of my mom's generation, are rarely given a voice in the creative space. Now, my mom has the opportunity to discover and tell her own story. I hope it inspires others to do the same and see that it's never too late to take the leap on their dreams." — Kaylee Kim, *Umma's Cut*.

"In these challenging times for independent documentary, I'm overwhelmed to receive this support and creative partnership to help bring my deeply personal film into the world. I'm profoundly thankful to Kartemquin and the Zhao-Chen Family Fund for championing complex Asian American

and Pacific Islander stories at a time when the cultural landscape makes this work feel more urgent than ever.” — Marisa Woo Grattan, *HO’OKA’AWALE_ 疏离 (SHŪLI)*.

“The film team and I are tremendously grateful to receive the support of the Zhao-Chen Family AAPI Voices Fund with Kartemquin Films. The funding will help us highlight the incredible work of our public school teachers, and showcase the impact of Asian-American K-12 students seeing themselves reflected in their school curriculums, after Illinois became the first state in the nation to mandate teaching Asian-American history in public schools. The fund will also support this film serving as an inspiring guide for other states, helping to strengthen their own implementation efforts.” — Shuling Yong, *UNTITLED TEACH ACT DOCUMENTARY*.

“Since the launch of our collaboration four years ago, Kartemquin has brought to life stories and voices that deepen our collective understanding of the AAPI community’s diverse experiences. My family and I are excited to see what Kaylee, Marisa and Shuling will create—and the impact their films will have.” — Peng Zhao on behalf of the fund.

“As this fund enters its third round, our commitment has only deepened. We’ve seen firsthand the beauty, complexity, and vital perspectives AAPI filmmakers bring to their work—and we know there’s so much more still to come”, says Stacy Robinson, Artistic Director for Kartemquin Films.

More on the film projects selected for this fellowship round:



UMMA’S CUT

Director: Kaylee Kim

Brief description of film: When a Korean American filmmaker fulfills her mother’s ask of teaching her how to edit, a story of aging, motherhood, and newfound creativity unfolds in the timeline they share.

Kaylee Kim is a Korean-American filmmaker and editor born and raised in Los Angeles. As a graduate from Chapman University’s Dodge College of Film

and Media Arts, she is dedicated to shaping raw footage into powerful, character-driven narratives. Bringing a cinematic eye and a human-centered approach to every project, her work spans short and feature-length documentaries, including *Black Outside*, which premiered on Prime Video and Apple TV and reached audiences worldwide. She has also collaborated with brands like Patagonia, Spotify, and Hyundai, crafting visually rich, emotionally grounded films. Most recently, *By Walking*, a

documentary she edited, screened at the Nashville Film Festival, reflecting her continued dedication to impactful storytelling. As a documentary editor, Kaylee values collaboration and the balance between structure and discovery in the edit, pursuing projects that amplify underrepresented voices and reveal humanity in everyday moments.



HO'OKA'AWALE_ 疏离 (SHŪLÍ)

Director: Marisa Woo Grattan

A filmmaker returns to the landscapes of her childhood in Honolulu to navigate the emotional distance between herself, her estranged father, and her Chinese American family's history in Hawai'i. A visual, meditative exploration of separation, intergenerational memory, and the lifelong search for belonging.

Marisa Woo Grattan is a Chinese American documentary filmmaker and visual storyteller based in Portland, Oregon and raised in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Her work brings a personal, place-based lens to stories of migration, intergenerational memory, and cross-cultural belonging. Marisa's Emmy-nominated films have screened nationally on PBS and in international spaces, including at the United Nations General Assembly Hall. She previously led the global video portfolio at UN Women, directing documentary and advocacy films that centered the rights of women and girls around the world. Marisa holds an MA in International Affairs from The New School for Public Engagement and a BA in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley. She is a 2025 BendFilm: Basecamp Fellow and a 2026 Oregon Humanities Community Storytelling Fellow.



UNTITLED TEAACH ACT DOCUMENTARY

Director: Shuling Yong

In 2021, Illinois became the first in the nation to mandate teaching Asian-American history in public schools through the passing of the Teaching Equitable Asian-American Community History (TEAACH) Act. But with no funding tied to the broadly-written bill, and a highly decentralized state education system that makes compliance

inconsistent and difficult, much work has to be done to ensure implementation goes well. Follow the stories of second-year teacher John Lee and 20-year teaching veteran Dawn Wiley as they navigate the challenges of weaving Asian-American history into their classes at their Illinois public schools.

Shuling Yong is an award-winning Singaporean documentary filmmaker, DP and Location Sound Mixer with over 15 years of experience. She has worked on films like *It's Only Life After All* (Sundance, 2023), *Becoming* (Netflix, 2020), *The Feeling of Being Watched* (Tribeca, 2018) and *And She Could Be Next* (Tribeca, 2020, dir. Grace Lee and Marjan Safinia).

Her feature-length directorial debut, *Unteachable*, a documentary following a young woman on a mission to bring empathy and the joy of learning back into classrooms where students are struggling in the mainstream system, and Shuling's debut short film, *Growing Roots*, premiered on the Discovery Channel in 2015.

Shuling is a program alumnus of the Tribeca Film Institute, Good Pitch Southeast Asia, Docs By The Sea, CNEX Chinese Documentary Forum, Kartemquin Films Diverse Voices in Docs fellowship, NewportFILM Cinematography Lab and Doc Society Queer Impact Producers Lab. She was also selected as an honoree for DOC NYC's "40 Under 40" List 2019, and the Newcity Film 50 Chicago Screen Gems List 2020.

ABOUT KARTEMQUIN FILMS

Sparkling democracy through documentary since 1966, Kartemquin is a collaborative center empowering filmmakers who create documentaries that foster a more engaged and just society.

The organization's films have received four Academy Award® nominations and won several major prizes, including six Emmys, four Peabody Awards, multiple Independent Spirit, IDA, PGA and DGA awards, and duPont-Columbia and Robert F. Kennedy journalism awards. Kartemquin is recognized as a leading advocate for independent public media, and has helped hundreds of artists via its filmmaker development programs that help further grow the field, such as KTQ Labs, Diverse Voices in Docs, and the acclaimed KTQ Internship.

Kartemquin is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization based in Chicago. www.kartemquin.org

MORE ABOUT THE FUNDER

The Fund represents a substantial investment by the Zhao-Chen family, building on their long standing commitment to accelerating opportunity and prosperity for the AAPI community in the United States. Mr. Zhao is a founding board member of The Asian American Foundation (TAAF), which has become a catalyzing force for improving AAPI advocacy, power, and representation across American society. The Zhao-Chen family have also convened and funded a variety of other initiatives

elevating AAPI voices, including through their support of the award-winning documentary “Finding Yingying,” a Kartemquin film directed by Jenny Shi.