Independence Public Media Foundation Announces $2.6 Million in Media-Making and Digital Equity Grants to 33 Projects and Organizations

PHILADELPHIA, December 15, 2021 – The Independence Public Media Foundation (IPMF) announces $2.6 million in its final round of grants for 2021. The grants focused support for community-centered journalism, digital equity research and policy, community-led and operated radio stations, and filmmaking, with an emphasis on supporting artists from, and films about, underrepresented communities.

In this latest round, the foundation awarded $1.3 million in continued operating support to seven key nonprofit partners as well as $400,000 to filmmakers, and $320,000 to regional community radio stations and radio projects. IPMF invested $511,000 toward increasing digital equity in the region, in addition to making matching funds available to support local newsrooms through the NewsMatch year-end giving campaign.

In total, IPMF awarded $9.4 million in grants in 2021 to advance the foundation’s mission to build and strengthen networks of people who are creating and sharing information, ideas, and stories for change and justice.

“Media-making has the power to ignite social change, but it requires deep and patient support, and it requires investing in people telling their own stories,” said Molly de Aguiar, IPMF’s president. “These grants, and all the grants we made throughout the year, reflect our commitment to lifting up the communities whose stories are too often misrepresented or excluded.”

Continued Support to Key Nonprofit Partners

In 2021, IPMF continued to explore ways to support the growth of its key nonprofit partners in a manner that allows each organization to grow at its own pace. These grants provide critical ongoing support for media-making organizations and storytelling projects that have been excluded from access to resources that amplify the voices of the communities they serve. Highlights of these grants include:

- A two-year grant to Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival (PAAFF) ($200,000), for general operating support that will boost the growth and transition of PAAFF from a mostly volunteer-led organization into a financially stable nonprofit business that...
compensates multiple key positions needed to develop to focus on increasing revenue and to strengthen the organization’s infrastructure.

- A one-year grant to **Resolve Philly** ($225,000), to support the incorporation of the Germantown Info Hub into a Community Wire Service—a network of hyperlocal bureaus meeting neighborhood information needs and serving as a mechanism for citywide authentic and accurate news coverage.

- A two-year grant to **The Colored Girls Museum** (TCGM) ($250,000), for general operating support and the promotion and archiving of the stories of Black girls and women. TCGM’s mission is to be a public ritual for the protection, praise, and grace of the ordinary extraordinary Black girl.

**Advancing Digital Equity in the Region**

IPMF aims to help communities get and stay connected to the internet and to access the information and resources they need to have agency and thrive. In addition to investing $1 million in digital equity projects this summer, IPMF made two digital equity grants in this round to support research and policy:

- **Next Century Cities** was awarded a two-year $300,000 to empower local community leadership to improve digital outcomes and to advance digital equity by engaging in federal and state broadband policymaking. The organization works alongside communities to support local officials who are working to expand broadband access and increase adoption.

- **Media, Inequality and Change Center (MIC Center)** was awarded a two-year $211,000 grant to assess and recommend corrections to the policy failures that enable digital-redlining and other exclusionary practices that disproportionately harm low-income families and communities of color. MIC Center, an IPMF key nonprofit partner, produces engaged research and analysis that explores the intersections between media, democracy, technology, policy, and social justice while collaborating with community leaders to help support activist initiatives and policy interventions.
Filmmaker Nominations

The foundation awarded $400,000 in grants to fourteen local film projects following a nominations process led by a committee of four film experts and practitioners from diverse backgrounds with a deep understanding of the local film and media arts landscape. This is IPMF’s second year practicing a community-led grant decision-making process.

“It brings me joy to support local filmmakers to start, continue, or finish a project they’ve been working so hard on to bring to fruition. Too many films are left unfinished due to lack of funding, particularly those projects led by filmmakers from underrepresented communities,” said IPMF program officer, Nuala Cabral. “These grants, along with our capacity building initiatives, further the foundation’s goal to provide robust support to Greater Philadelphia filmmakers, helping them share their stories in our community and beyond.”

Read Nuala’s essay about the process that led to this grantmaking round.

Highlights of the nominated filmmaker projects include:

- **Spirit of 52nd directed by Aidan Un, Amelia Carter, Raishad Momar**, is a hybrid/experimental moving portrait which incorporates non-fiction/verite documentary elements, archival scenes, and some minimally scripted/directed scenes. The film will treat 52nd Street—a once thriving Black business corridor in West Philly—as its main character, meandering between various stakeholders and memories, past and present, individual and collective. ($25,000)

- **With My Own Hands, directed by Tshay Williams**, centers the theme of memory. When a young girl suddenly becomes ill at a family party, she must retrace her memories to uncover the true cause of her mysterious sickness. ($75,000)

- **Talking Walls, directed by Marcellus Armstrong**, is an audio-visual oral history project centering the narratives of queer and Black elders. With record interviews and documentation of subjects who have resided in one location for 15 years or longer, The project will culminate into an experimental documentary film where queer elders discuss perspectives on home and personal sanctuaries. ($25,000)
Support for Community Radio

The Philadelphia region is home to a number of low-power and digital community radio stations, as well as numerous grassroots media podcasts. IPMF awarded $260,000 in one-year grants for operating support and equipment upgrades to six community radio stations, as well as $60,000 to three podcasts.

Highlights of the community radio and podcast grants include:

- **Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas** - the Farm-worker Support Committee (CATA) is a Bridgeton, NJ, Spanish-language community radio station that serves as a source of information, entertainment, and education so that the Latino community can be united and fight together for their rights as human beings and achieve justice for a full life.

- **YES! (Your Empowered Sexuality)** - is an initiative that provides intersectional, consent-based, shame-free sexuality education to all people using interactive workshops, podcasting, social media, and other mediums.

Click [HERE](mailto:enni@independencemedia.org) to see a full listing of all 33 grants.

**About Independence Public Media Foundation**

The Independence Public Media Foundation funds and supports creative, community-centered media and media making across Greater Philadelphia. The Foundation’s goals reflect an expansive definition of media, including journalism, digital literacy, and creative expression, as a pathway for building power with communities. Through grant-making and other programs, IPMF supports building and strengthening networks of people who are creating and sharing information, ideas, and stories for change and justice.

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