

For Immediate Release  
June 1, 2023

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## THE 15TH AUSTIN ASIAN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCED FOR JUNE 21-25 AT THE AFS CINEMA

*With over 20 films by Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) filmmakers, this year's festival will celebrate Texas filmmakers, documentaries about older generation of Asian Americans, and a wide range of narrative short films*

(AUSTIN, TEXAS – June 1, 2023; source: Juice Consulting) – The **Austin Asian American Film Festival (AAAFF)** returns for its 15th iteration, taking place **June 21-25, 2023** at the **AFS Cinema** (6406 N I-35 Suite 3100 Austin, TX 78752). AAAFF, one of the preeminent AANHPI arts organizations in town, champions Asian and Asian American stories via media arts and empowers Asian Americans to explore opportunities in cinema. On **June 21**, the festival will feature “**Starring Jerry as Himself (2023)**” as its **Opening Night Film**, with an afterparty at **St. John Studios**. And on **June 22**, AAAFF will celebrate **Texas Two-Step Thursday**, a special lineup of a feature film and a shorts block all by Texas AANHPI filmmakers, with a dually Texas-focused afterparty. Badges for the festival can be found [here](#), and for media in need of a press pass, please fill out the form [here](#). Additionally, on **June 17**, Hold Out Brewing will be premiering a Thai Mango IPA beer called **Double Happiness**, with proceeds going to AAAFF (the beer will also be sold during the festival at AFS Cinema). For more information on AAAFF, see [here](#).

“It's the 15th iteration of our event and we can't wait to celebrate AANHPI independent and emerging films with our Austin audience once again!” said **Hanna Huang, AAAFF Executive Director**. “This year we are especially seeing the outcomes of the advocacy and community-building work we do in the local film community with our Thursday filled with work made by local filmmakers or those with Texas ties!”

“We're really excited for this year's festival,” said **Jenny Nulf, AAAFF Director of Programming**. “From expanding an extra day to our Texas Two-Step Thursday night, there's a lot of really great additions to this year that will enrich the festival, and keep attendees busy.”

See below for a list of confirmed films for this year's AAAFF, as well as a brief synopsis on each work.

## FEATURE FILMS:

### **Starring Jerry As Himself [OPENING NIGHT]**

Directed by **Law Chen**, and starring **Jerry Hsu**, a family documents how their immigrant father Jerry, a recently retired Florida man, was recruited by the Chinese police to be an undercover agent, only to discover a darker truth.

### **Kapwa Texas**

As the world grapples with an emerging global pandemic, three young Filipino women forge unexpected connections with their families and discover themselves in the process. Directed by **PJ Raval** (*Call Her Ganda, Trinidad: Transgender Frontier, Before You Know It*), this film is a self-documented time capsule during turbulent times, *Kapwa Texas* captures the unbreakable bond between Filipino family and community.

### **Wisdom Gone Wild**

In this immersive meditation on elder consciousness and the act of caregiving a parent with dementia, director and writer **Rea Tajiri** centers her mother's storytelling wisdom as the dream fabric for this film. Rose's renditions of popular songs of her era provide the soundtrack for time travel as we witness her evolution across nine decades of living. A delicate weave between past and present, parenting and being parented, the reliability of memory and the desire to reinvent one's own life when you can't remember - are reflected upon in this tender and humorous film about aging, loss, mortality and transformation.

### **Waiting for the Light to Change [CENTERPIECE]**

Written and directed by **Linh Tran** with the help of **Jewells Santos** and **Delia Van Praag**, this film takes place over the course of a week-long beachside getaway. Amy, having recently undergone dramatic weight loss, finds herself wrestling between loyalty to her best friend Kim and her attraction to Kim's new boyfriend.

### **The Fall of the I-Hotel**

The Manilatown Heritage Foundation presents a new restoration of the iconic 1983 documentary, *The Fall of the I-Hotel*. This film has been lovingly re-scanned from a pristine 16mm print and digitized at 2K under the supervision of filmmaker **Curtis Choy**.

After a decade of spirited resistance to the razing of Manilatown, the battle for housing in San Francisco ends in the brutal eviction of the elderly tenants of the International Hotel. *The Fall of the I-Hotel* serves as the witness to the community's fight to survive, and as a tribute to the dignity and strength of the "Manongs", or elderly tenants of the hotel. Viewed continuously by students of Asian American Studies since its original release in 1983, *The Fall of the I-Hotel* not only documents the struggle to save the I-Hotel, it also provides an overview of Filipino American history. This is not just a story about old men in an old building, but of multiple tragedies: ethnic communities redeveloped out of existence, housing gobbled up by realtors, the shabby treatment of the elderly, and the betrayal of American ideals learned in the Philippines by its American pioneers.

### **The Grizzlies Truth**

Award-winning filmmaker and super fan **Kat Jayme** sets out to uncover the truth behind the disappearance of her beloved hometown NBA team in hopes of bringing them back. In her obsessive quest to find out what really happened to the team and its cult fandom, she unravels the mystery that's haunted the NBA's Vancouver Grizzlies fans for 20 years. *The Grizzlies Truth* is a 'true-crime style' story exploring the deep roots of fandom, and an irreverent expose of the wild business of professional sports.

### **The Taste of Mango**

**Chloe Abrahams'** directorial debut feature is an enveloping, hypnotic, urgently personal meditation on family, memory, identity, violence, and love. At its center are three extraordinary women: the director's mother, Rozana; her grandmother, Jean; and the director herself. Their stories, by turns difficult and jubilant, testify to the entangled and ever-changing nature of inheritance and the ways in which we both hurt and protect the ones we love.

### **How to Have an American Baby**

Directed by **Leslie Tai**, a kaleidoscopic voyage into the shadow economy catering to Chinese tourists who travel to the US to give birth for citizenship. Told through a series of intimately observed vignettes, the story of a hidden global economy emerges—depicting the fortunes and tragedies that befall the ordinary people caught in its web.

## **SHORT FILMS:**

“This year we received a record number of short film submissions which made the final decisions extra tough, but we couldn't be more thrilled with our lineup!” said **Neha Aziz and Yuxi Lai, AAFF short film programmers**. “We selected 15 unique and wonderful shorts to share with our audience highlighting Texas filmmakers, documentaries about our older generation of Asian Americans, and a wide range of narrative short films.”

### *Texas Block*

#### **Missile**

From director **Christopher Hwisu Kim**; When Alison Cho gets an emergency alert on her phone warning of an imminent missile attack, she calls her mom in a panic—only to struggle to explain the situation because she doesn't know the Korean word for "missile."

#### **Supermarket Affairs**

From director **Hang Luong Nguyen**; A Vietnamese immigrant mother and daughter in the US argue over how to honor the late patriarch as they shop for his second death anniversary, and inadvertently involve a handsome stranger at the local Asian supermarket.

### **Here to Make Friends**

From Co-directors **Meghan & Justin Ross**; An anxious, aging millennial, Arab-American Austin transplant goes on a mission to find the platonic love of her life after realizing she's never had one lasting female friend but will have to figure out how to befriend herself first.

### **When You Left Me on that Boulevard**

From director **Kayla Abuda Galang**; Teenager Ly and her cousins get high before a boisterous family Thanksgiving at their auntie's house in southeast San Diego in 2006.

### Documentary Block

### **Benkyodo: The Last Manju Shop in J-Town**

Co-directed by **Tadashi Nakamura & Akira Boch**, Ricky and Bobby Okamura wrestle with closing their beloved family-owned manju shop after serving the San Francisco Japantown community for 115 years.

### **The Things I Haven't Told You Yet**

A collage-style, personal narrative composed of emotionally complex memories, questions, thoughts, and stories that meditate on identity, race, transnational adoption, grief, and intergenerational trauma. Director **Maya Wanner** pieces them together to create a mosaic of a mother-daughter relationship shaped by things left unsaid.

### **Mia's Mission**

Mia Yamamoto has seen it all. She was born in an incarceration camp during World War II. At age 60 she came out as transgender after a 20-year career as a criminal defense attorney in Los Angeles. At age 78, Mia shows no signs of slowing down. Directed by **Jireh Deng**, we follow Mia on her mission throughout the years to rally communities of color around issues of racism and to bring visibility to the LGBTQ community. Her passion is rooted in her deep ties to the geography of L.A. and the neighborhoods she calls home.

### **Dear Corky**

Directed by **Curtis Chin**, this documentary short is about famed street photographer, Corky Lee, who recently passed away from COVID. The short follows Corky's career over the course of fifty years where he's covered the most important events in Asian American history, including issues of hate crimes.

### **Stamp Our Story**

Co-directed by **Kaia Rose & Robert Horsting**, this film follows the award-winning extraordinary story of three elderly Nisei (2nd generation) women who led a successful 15-year campaign to issue the Go For Broke: Japanese American Soldiers of WWII Forever stamp.

### Narrative Block

### **Bayard Street**

Directed by **Cindy Chu**, set in 1980's NYC, two Chinese restaurant workers find love while chasing their American dreams.

**Eid Mubarak**

Directed by **Mahnoor Euceph**, a privileged six-year-old Pakistani girl embarks on a mission to save her beloved pet goat from being eaten on the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Azha, only to learn the meaning of sacrifice.

**Swamp Ass**

Directed by **Katrina Vergara**; A young woman gains more than a confidence boost after buying a pair of influencer-approved pants.

**Lunchbox**

From director **Anne Hu**; When a Taiwanese American woman prepares lunches from her childhood, she struggles to forgive herself for pushing away her immigrant mother.

**Inheritance**

From director **Erin Lau**; A struggling nature photographer is forced to confront the pain his family has carried for generations.

**Bloody gravel**

From director **Hojjat Hosseini**; Roya and Bashir are a couple in love and are forced to flee their home. Hoping to enter Iran, they persuade smugglers Saku and Osho to get them there without a hitch, but things don't go as planned.

**ABOUT AAAFF:**

Austin Asian American Film Festival (AAFF) produces programs that tell Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) stories through film, educates about AANHPI issues, and builds community through partnerships with creatives and other organizations. AAAFF is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department, Texas Commission on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts. More information can be found at [www.aaafilmfest.org](http://www.aaafilmfest.org).

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