

# REEL STORIES

## 2019 ANNUAL REPORT





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# WHO WE ARE

Reel Stories believes that when women and non-binary people are better represented behind the scenes in the media, they will be better reflected on the screen. In order to build equity in the film and media industry, Reel Stories creates a path for young women and non-binary youth to make their own content and enter media careers. Reel Stories empowers our participants with the skills, experience, and connections to succeed in the industry and aspire to leadership in their field.



To achieve our mission, we've created a pipeline for participants to go from no experience to professional experience in the film industry.

At Reel Stories, young women and non-binary people learn that their stories and ideas have value and that their audience is waiting.



# ACTIVISM

## List of Women and Non-Binary Filmmakers

In 2019, we published our first list of women and non-binary filmmakers as a part of our mission to uplift and recognize the voices of those typically marginalized in media. This resource was created through community contributions and suggestions and will continue to be updated by our staff and student filmmakers. Check it out on our website [here](#).

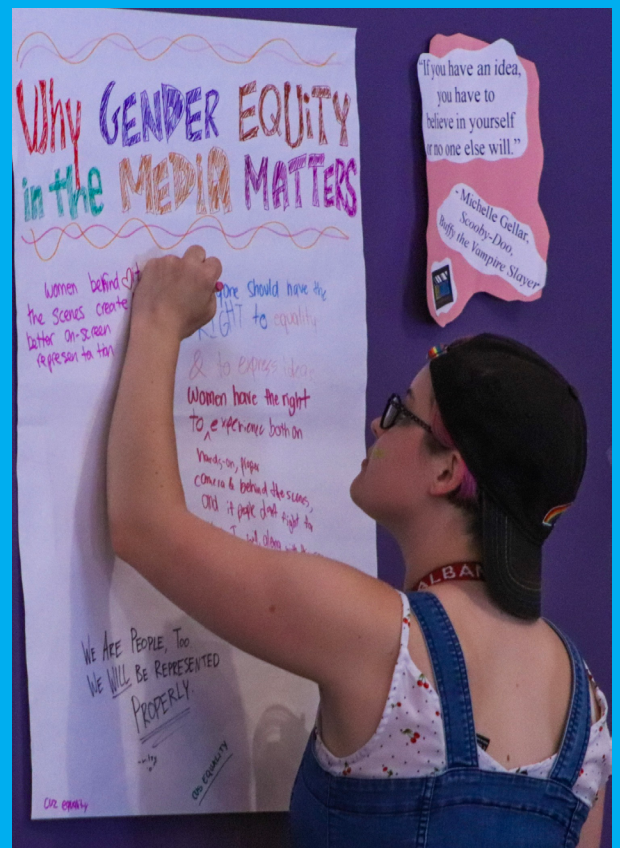
## Strike Solidarity Site

In support of the Oakland School District teacher's strike, Reel Stories transformed our office into a strike solidarity site for students to attend while their teachers were negotiating for better conditions. Students learned basic fundamentals of filmmaking, experimented with new equipment, and discussed the lack of diversity in media.

## Time's Up Film

Our youth filmmakers are making a documentary that is set to premiere in March for Women's History Month about the #MeToo and Time's Up movement. This opportunity was made possible with generous funds from the California Arts Council and California Humanities.

MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE





# BOOT CAMP

Reel Stories Boot Camp welcomes young women and non-binary youth who may not have made a film before into our program to learn from professionals in the industry how to create media. Working with experienced mentors, our filmmakers learn media literacy and technical skills and are able to produce short films in two weeks that honor the power of their voices and the importance of their stories.

In 2018 we extended our boot camps from one week to two and reduced our number of boot camps to only one session. In 2019, we were able to keep two-week camps but raise the number of sessions back up to two, enabling us to accommodate all the campers that wanted to come.

In 2019,  
48 boot camp  
filmmakers made  
10 short films.

LEARNING THE  
FOUNDATIONS OF  
FILMMAKING

WORKING WITH  
EXPERIENCED  
MENTORS



# ADVANCED CAMP

Once filmmakers have completed one session of Boot Camp, they are eligible to return to our Advanced Camp. Most of our Advanced filmmakers return year after year, growing their skills and confidence. In our two week Advanced program, filmmakers hone their skills in cinematography, lighting, sound, editing, and motion graphics. They build their filmmaking community, enabling them to continue making films outside of camp and gain deeper relationships with mentors and guest lecturers.

B U I L D I N G  
C O M M U N I T Y  
AND SKILLS  
YEAR AFTER YEAR

In 2019,  
10 advanced  
filmmakers made 2  
short films.



"Reel Stories is creating a safe space where young women and non-binary people can come and express their ideas freely and make what they wanna make. They're educating young kids like me who want to go into this business so there can be more diversity in the business."

- Vi Spencer, Student Board Member and Advanced Camp Filmmaker 2019-2020



# BOOT CAMP LOS ANGELES

The history of discrimination in the studio system and network television is clear. Through our Los Angeles camp we engage professionals working within that system, allowing them to share their experiences and mentor young women and non-binary people.

In our third year of Reel Stories Los Angeles, 25 girls and non-binary youth learned production skills in the heart of the film industry. We partnered with Glendale Community College, where our campers had access to stages, edit bays, and a campus full of locations.

In 2019, our senior media teacher Heidi Cregge Cabra moved to Los Angeles and will be spearheading workshops for 2020.

THREE YEARS  
IN AND  
GROWING

In 2019  
25 LA filmmakers  
made 5 short films.



# REEL STORIES INSTITUTE

The Reel Stories Filmmaking Institute was created to give our most ambitious filmmakers a space to create professional-level films in a production company environment. The Institute is open to Advanced Camp graduates 16-21 years old (college attendees are welcome).

The Reel Stories Institute celebrated our third year in 2019, with filmmakers coming from as far away as Dubai and Alaska to be a part of it.

Our Institute filmmakers had the opportunity to film at Ciel Creative Space, which is the only woman and non-binary owned shooting studio in the Bay Area.

The program mirrors a professional production with dedicated media teachers working as mentors.

Our Institute participants attended career lunchtime talks, with additional time to network with professionals.

Our most involved filmmakers requested this program as an opportunity to grow their skills and their professional portfolio.

**In 2019, 12 Institute filmmakers made 2 short films.**





# EVALUATION

We have two types of monitoring and evaluation we conduct. Directly after camp, we ask the campers about their experiences at camp and what they have gained. Additionally, we continue to follow up with our alumnae through formal evaluations and via our ongoing development programs. In this way we're able to see how our campers use their media creation tools and hear back from them about how Reel Stories has prepared them for academic pursuits, professional work, and where the program has led to specific job opportunities.



## Boot Camp

99% of bootcamp attendees thought attending Reel Stories was a good experience.  
77% felt that their technical skills (camera, editing, production) improved greatly during camp.  
71% felt that their storytelling skills have improved greatly during camp.  
77% felt like they can do something to change gender inequity in the media after attending Reel Stories.  
61% plan on attending Reel Stories again next year.

## Advanced Camp

100% Advanced Attendees thought attending Reel Stories Advanced Camp was a good experience.  
100% felt that their technical skills (camera, editing, production) improved greatly during camp.  
78% felt that their storytelling skills have improved greatly during camp.  
100% felt after their time at Reel Stories Advanced Program they view media more critically on topics such as diversity.  
100% plan on attending Reel Stories again next year

## Institute

100% said that overall, attending the Reel Stories Institute was a good experience.  
100% felt that they made strong connections with the camp staff, volunteers, and workshop leaders.  
100% intend to take advantage of additional Reel Stories Institute opportunities.  
92% felt that their technical skills improved greatly during the 2 week program.  
67% felt that their storytelling and story creation skills improved greatly during the 2 week program.  
92% felt that by the end of the program, their overall skills as a filmmaker greatly improved.  
100% felt that they can do something to make a change in gender equality in media.  
50% plan on attending the Reel Stories Institute next year

# PRODUCTION COMPANY

In the Reel Stories Production Company's second year, our filmmakers had the opportunity to work for a variety of clients and expand their filmmaking skills as professionals.

Reel Stories helps our filmmakers get matched with filmmaking gigs that elevate their production skills, allow them to get paid for their work, and to have experience to put on their resumes.

In 2019, our Production Company worked on a variety of projects, including instructional bellydance videos, assisting YouTuber Cassandra Bankson for a short film shoot, recording youth hip hop performances, filming panel discussions for Chapter 510 and the Department of Make Believe as well as Love Your Nature and beginning a partnership with Oakland Creative Mornings.





# YEAR ROUND PROGRAMING

More than a summer camp! In 2019, Reel Stories hosted year-round programs, workshops, and events.



Women's Filmmaking Weekend



YouTube Bootcamp



Animation Day



Edna Brewer After School Program

Club Reel Stories: Reel Stories curriculum for teenagers at Oakland Tech and Dougherty Valley High School.

Women's Weekend: a filmmaking weekend for women over 18. We were able to have two sessions this year.

After School Filmmaking Program: offered at Edna Brewer Middle School, taught by Reel Stories media teachers.

Screenings of media created by women such as Jinn, Subira, Half the Picture, The Pushouts, and Amsterdam Ave.

Bay Area Girls Rock Camp/GRASP: Music Video Workshop with Reaa Puri.

Title IX Workshop in partnership with About Face sponsored by Alliance for Girls.

Pre-Professional Day "How to Succeed As a Production Assistant" w/ Christie Goshe.

YouTube Bootcamp: Reel Stories had the opportunity to host this workshop twice, once with YouTube Cassandra Bankson, and once with filmmaker Ya'Shalan Nelson.

Animation Day: Students learned the basics of animation through stop motion, pixilation, and motion graphics.

# DIVERSITY

50%  
campers identify  
as people  
of color

"Reel Stories teaches women and non-binary people filmmaking skills in order to empower us to create films that are representative of our experiences. I love being a part of this supportive community"

- Grace Patterson, former camper and alumni engagement coordinator



40%  
campers receive  
financial aid

"As a person of color and a woman with family members who have disabilities and are in foster care - I've witnessed the journeys of people who are not shown in media, and I can see my own people wanting representation. Film gives me the opportunity to give a voice to people who don't have the platform"

- Liz Tril, institute filmmaker and production company member





# ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

## Connecting Alumni with Opportunities

With former Reel Stories participant Grace Patterson stepping into the roll of our new Alumni Engagement Coordinator position, Reel Stories has been able to dedicate more time to reaching out to Alumni. 2019 is the first year we have set up an Official Reel Stories Alumni network, in which we connect our alumni with information about professional gigs, film screenings, networking events, and tours. Through this network, we keep our Alumni engaged with the Reel Stories community and are able to assist them through transitioning from beginning filmmakers to professional filmmakers.

## Tours and Mentors

This year, our filmmakers got to see media creation in action by visiting the 13 Reasons Why set (twice!), touring Airbnb, Pixar, Google, the Walt Disney Family Museum, and Meyer Sound. They engaged in a virtual meeting with the former President of Fox 2000 Pictures Elizabeth Gabler, attended a Women in Film Panel with the women of Pixar at McMullen in Oakland, and had a Social Media Advisory Meeting with social media influencer and long-time fan of Reel Stories, Cassandra Bankson.

## Producers Program

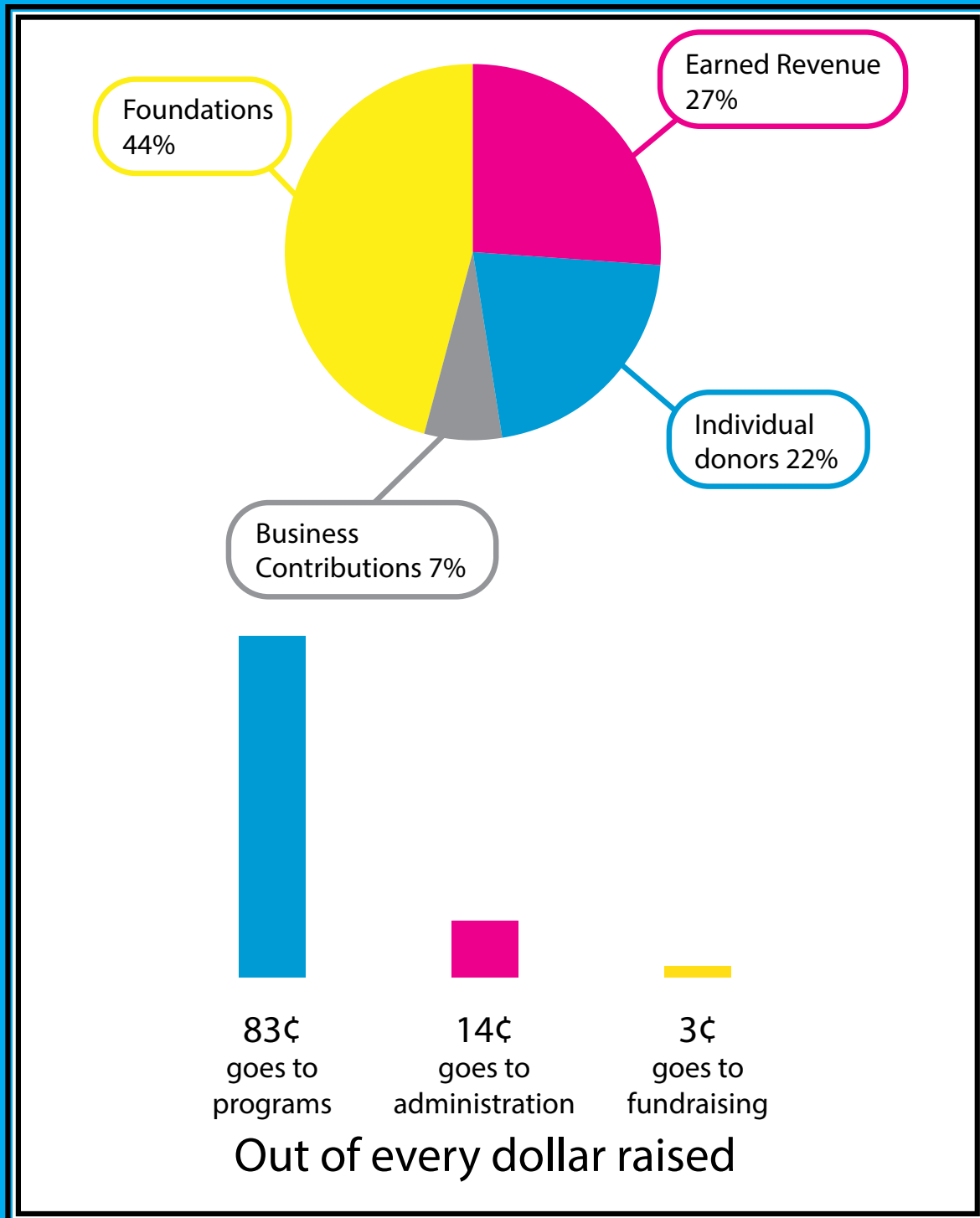
Through our Producers program, Reel Stories alumni work with filmmakers at our Boot Camp and Advanced Camp to mentor and advise new generations of students. Our producers are eligible for stipends in order to make this position accessible as possible, and we are committed to providing this opportunity to our alumni. Our alumni are fantastic mentors for our young campers, and this job helps our community build their resumes.

"Reel Stories is the reason I want to go into filmmaking. I aspire to be an influence for women in and outside of the film industry."

- Jane Simonetti, former institute filmmaker and student at Chapman

# FINANCIAL

2019 was a great year for Reel Stories! In 2019 we recieved our largest grant ever from Radio Drama Network, sucessfully raised \$50k in May for the second year in a row, and were able to give finanical aid to all of our filmmakers in need.





# FILM FESTIVALS

We had 500 attendees at our three film festivals in the Bay Area and Los Angeles.

In 2019, our campers' films were accepted into

Drunken Film Festival

Social Justice Film Festival

Dancing Spider Film Festival

AfroComicCon Youth Film Festival

California Humanities Queer Comic Exhibit

Docamedia's 3rd Short Documentary Contest

All American High School Film Festival

Oklahoma Twister Alley Festival

San Diego Latino Film Festival





## Message from Esther Pearl

For the past 7 years, I've been working with and training the next generation of female and gender non-conforming filmmakers. I have learned so much from working with these teens, and I know our future will be in good hands if we can survive the present. For the past few months, we have been working with an elite team of female and gender non-conforming filmmakers as they produce a documentary about their experiences while coming of age in the Times Up and Me Too era. What has struck me the most with seeing these young women in action is recognizing how much mental space and energy they expend each and every day trying to get through it without being harassed or discriminated against. They have to navigate dress codes at school and during after school sports. They deal with being cat called as they head to the cafe to meet up with friends. They hear adults that they admire casually say things that are hurtful or sexualizing. They have to think about where they park, what they wear, who they can trust anytime they go out. Even in the safety of their own homes they can't fully relax since social media and traditional media is still fraught with mixed messages and the sexualization of their lives.

Their experiences are heartbreaking and hard to hear. It makes me worry about their mental health and overall safety. Additionally, I'm worried for our society at large- all this time and energy young women have to expend to navigate a world that still tells them they are less than. What if young women could just get up and move through their day without worrying about how their outfit will be perceived? What if they could go to class and not have to consider whether or not they're asking too many questions? Or not enough questions? What would happen if they didn't have so much psychic space taken up with trying to conform into a box that never even considered them in the first place? How many of them wouldn't avoid careers that they would flourish in because they don't see themselves represented, therefore thinking it's off limits to them? What if they could just take up space?

The young filmmakers we work with are brilliant and courageous. They come from diverse backgrounds and hold strong opinions. I am honored that they chose to spend their time with us and as much as we are training them to be content creators they are training us to see the world through their eyes.

Thank you all for your continued support of our work. Now more than ever do we need to show young women and non-binary folks that there is space for their stories, their creativity and their leadership. Please continue to support Reel Stories and help us continue to reshape the media so it reflects our society behind the scenes and on the screen.

*Esther Pearl*

Esther Pearl  
Founder/Executive Director





Together we can show girls and gender non-conforming youth that their voices matter and give them the skills, experience, and connections they need to succeed in media careers.

“Participating with Reel Stories is a must for teenage girls who want to make an impact on the world through film. My daughter found her passion for film and just finished her fourth summer at Reel Stories! I cannot thank Esther Pearl enough for providing the springboard and support for my daughter through Reel Stories trainings, guest filmmaker events, and film showings.

- Reel Stories Parent

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