SXSW FILM & TV FESTIVAL 2025 OFFICIAL SELECTION

OFFICIAL SELECTION 2025 SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

DC/DOX FILM FESTIVAL 2025

the tallest dwarf

Directed & Produced by Julie Forrest Wyman
Produced by Lindsey Dryden, Shaleece Haas, Jonna McKone

TRT 92 minutes | LANGUAGE: English
A When Fancy Farms Production
In Association with Multitude Films

DCDOX Film Festival SCREENING & Reality Check Forum Event

Press & Sales Contact:
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LOGLINE | SYNOPSIS | IMPACT

LOGLINE

25 words

A filmmaker's exploration of her own dwarfism leads her into a community in flux - and a question: can we see beauty and power in disability.

49 words

When a filmmaker with a rare form of dwarfism seeks out people with bodies like hers, she enters a community in flux. She joins forces with little people artists to trace a troubled history of being put on display. Together they forge a vision of disabled beauty and power.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

THE TALLEST DWARF charts filmmaker Julie Wyman's quest to find her place within the little people (LP) community at a moment when dwarf identity is poised to radically change. As Julie unpacks the rumors of "partial dwarfism" in her family she finds that hers is the last of a body type she has inherited. She joins forces with a group of dwarf artists to confront the legacy of being fetishized and put on display. Together they create films that reclaim a complicated history and speak back to the echoes of eugenics in the newly emerging pharmaceutical interventions that make little people taller. Through its personal and expanding perspective, the film invites audiences to a new way of seeing.

LONG SYNOPSIS

THE TALLEST DWARF charts filmmaker Julie Wyman's quest to find her place within the little people (LP) community at the very moment when dwarf bodies, identity, and culture are poised to radically change. Through a personal and expanding perspective, the film invites audiences into a new way of seeing.

Julie's dwarf-like body, with her disproportionately long torso and short limbs, has been the focus of ridicule, ensuring her a childhood of "oompa loompa" taunts. Her father and grandmother share her unusual proportions, but they never saw their bodies as the focus of a shared identity. So for a long time her body made her feel not only different, but also alone. The film starts with Julie's search to know "what we are - and if there are other people like us out there."

As Julie's story unfolds, the film familiarizes us with dwarf culture. We meet little people artists and advocates, parents of LPs, and see rarely-seen archival footage that witnesses forgotten dwarf stories, and also reveals the patronizing, fetishistic perspective through which LPs have been seen.

Julie joins forces with a group of dwarf artists to confront the legacy of being put on display. Their work opens into a participatory process and builds a sense of dwarf pride and autonomy.

Julie explores her own family history -- poring over photos, confronting her parents, and engaging her father in playful explorations of their stature. Eventually a genetic test yields a diagnosis of hypochondroplasia dwarfism. Julie realizes that her body is the last of a multi-generational body type she has inherited.

At the very moment Julie enters this world, the community is facing a dramatic shift. New drugs promising to make little people taller are about to hit the market, posing seismic questions for the community. While some see these treatments as a gift of medical science, to LPs and families who've fought for decades to instill dwarf pride, these drugs feel like a step toward eradication. This quandary resonates with Julie's own sense of being at the end of the line of her family's physique.

In THE TALLEST DWARF these three narrative arcs – the LP community reconciling differences about controversial new drugs; an individual navigating her membership within LP community; and the process of co-creating films - are interwoven to interrogate how we gaze upon others. What is the lifelong impact of being seen as different? Is it possible to transform the lens through which LP and disabled bodies have been viewed? The filmmaking process offers an inquiry into how we see dwarfism and difference and challenges the notion that we should change ourselves rather than the structures that harm us. Julie's journey into, through, and finally -with- the LP community gradually reveals what it means for little people to reclaim the gaze.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT & CONTEXT

I became a filmmaker as a response to living in a body that was always seen as different — never fitting into well-established marginal categories. I am fat, but often not seen as fat enough for fat activism. I am bisexual, and have sometimes felt unseen in the LGBTQ community. And then there are the rumors of 'partial' dwarfism in my family. My dwarf-like body, with its long torso and short limbs, inherited from my father, ensured me a childhood of "oompa loompa" taunts and forged my identity as someone who does not fit in anywhere. Growing up, I never knew what to call this difference or whether there was anyone outside my family who looked like me.

In my last months of college, I watched Marlon Riggs' documentary *Tongues Untied*. By then I had forged my own sense of radical and defiant pride in my own body: I knew I wanted to dedicate my life to making bodies like mine more visible, to vastly expand our culture's stiflingly narrow standards of beauty, but I didn't yet know how I would do that. As I took in Marlon Riggs' bold style and passionate rendering of finding a community united in creative and political resistance, I heard the call to become a filmmaker; to speak about the experiences that fall between categories and forms; to combine the poetry of film language and the power of cinema's scale to build the world I want to inhabit. In the decades since, my work has focused on expanding our cultural perception of whose bodies belong and centering stories of people who have been othered because of their gender, sexuality, or size. While this past work was motivated by my personal experience, I have never dared to tell my own story. All the while I have always felt the ethical tension of telling other people's stories.

I began this film by chronicling my search for a diagnosis that would explain why my body looks the way it does. In the process I was introduced to a story much larger than my own: a crisis in the dwarfism community sparked by new drugs promising to make little people taller. As I expanded my film to encompass my new community, I began to recognize the importance of incorporating my own story and reflecting on my own position. My recent diagnosis of *hypochondroplasia* dwarfism has created an opening for me to seek my place inside the little people community, but also to question the boundaries between who is welcome in a given community and who is not. This insider-outsider position affords me a unique perspective into the question of belonging. It allows me to explore the experiences of fitting and not fitting—and to weigh the value of belonging alongside the cost of conformity.

With THE TALLEST DWARF, my lived experiences and my collaborations with our film's other participants make visible a world where we not only understand difference, but celebrate it. While I have been energetically and literally fueled by the embrace and support of my field, my true measure of success as a filmmaker resides with the audience. Have I—have we, the team, together—created a new world, a new moment? Have we rendered a possibility that didn't exist but was always possible: a sensation, even if fleeting, that our bodies are stunningly beautiful and worthy of beholding and fully living within? Have we found and pushed open a crack in the seemingly solid sky? It has always been difficult to work in the belly of the beast, in an artform so reliant on industry and market and so intertwined with pushing a narrow beauty standard that I want to dismantle. As I share with my collaborator Sofiya in the film, I believe that this work is worth it because when we shift perspective and redistribute the means of production, images can shake up, knock down, and re-imagine the representational legacy that has caused us harm.

The arc of my story bends from a personal desire to claim and name something precious to me - my body's difference - towards an exploration of a situation and stakes much larger than my own: the little people community in the verge of major change. For this reason it's always been essential to me to open up, to share, the storytelling power. Working with my new community, friends and film participants, I shaped the film’s focus around the experiences of little people (LPs) and the broader social and political context of disability including physical and mental, visible and non-apparent disabilities, communities impacted by the medicalization of their bodies and others whose bodies do not conform to cultural notions of "normal.”

THE TALLEST DWARF is about the power of the **image** - and the potential to use images to reshape our experiences of embodiment, power and perspective. It engages with a legacy of being disempowered by the media, and imagines a radical reinvention of the act of image making. The film’s central story pivots - from my act of filming my to my act of sharing a filmmaking process with the little people community. This is a film about the experience of isolation and falling in between categories, and also a film about the liberating quality of finding connection.

There are over **400 forms of dwarfism** that fall under the broad category of “skeletal dysplasia”. Many little people have no medical complications; others experience severe complications, including respiratory and orthopedic issues that can require multiple surgeries. In the most severe cases, complications can be fatal. Little People of America (LPA), founded in 1957 and the largest group of its kind in the world, defines dwarfism as a genetic condition that usually results in short stature, an adult height under 4 '10, and a skeletal dysplasia diagnosis. There are close to 30,000 people with dwarfism in the US.

New **pharmaceutical drugs** target the gene mutation that results in slower bone growth for those with achondroplasia dwarfism. While many hope these new treatments will prevent the medical complications, the clinical trials are focused on increasing patients’ height, which few in the LP community see as an issue that needs “fixing.” The first of several treatments arrived on the market in late 2021 with heated discussions about the ethics, safety and community and cultural impacts. Several additional drugs that are even easier to administer (via a pill versus a shot, for example) are nearing approval. Many little people are asking: what (if anything) about dwarfism needs “treatment”? Meanwhile, LPA is navigating a new normal in which most insured parents of LPs are offered these pharma treatments upon birth or diagnosis of their LP child, often before the family learns about dwarf identity, culture, mental health support and physical and other adaptations available for their child. Rare disease pharmaceutical companies have hovered amongst the market’s top performing stocks, and their drugs for rare diseases are priced extraordinarily highly. Many LPs are worried about whether this treatment will exclude less-resourced families.

While some believe that use of the drug should be a personal choice, this is complicated by the fact that the treatments can only be given in early childhood and thus parents will make the decision for their children. 80% of people with dwarfism are born to average-height parents, most of whom have no prior exposure to LP communities and culture. This disconnect is further amplified when parents have developed their ideas about little people through mainstream representations. In art, popular culture and science, dwarfs appear as spectacle or specimens – serving as entertainment, comedic relief and signifying magical powers or moral failure. From the Wizard of Oz’s Munchkins to Victorian-era sideshows to a proliferation of reality TV shows, the often grotesque and offensive history of the representation of little people demonstrates how people with visible bodily differences have been used for entertainment and treated with suspicion or disdain. Cultural and financial factors affect how families navigate medical intervention and surgeries, adaptive tools and homes, teasing, education and pride in identity.

The broader ethical questions raised by these drugs also have powerful resonance for communities navigating discrimination associated with disability, gender, race and other so-called differences. Genetic medicine raises ethical questions about whether we should “correct” genetic conditions and disabilities just because we can. After decades of battles for disability rights and access, will drugs like these shift the emphasis away from the structural change we continue to need? A critical disability justice model favors the “social model” of disability, which aims to change the built world and society to include disabled bodies and needs over the “medical model” which believes in changing the individual to fit society. A statement from Little People of America, the world’s largest advocacy for people with dwarfism: ““We are concerned that this recently approved drug attempts a pharmaceutical solution to a societal issue” How might these drugs perpetuate a narrative that dwarf bodies require fixing, and even eradication?

Q AND A WITH DIRECTOR JULIE FORREST WYMAN

How did you begin making this film?

There has always been this animating force in my life—the thing that made me feel separate on the playground from kids. I always felt as though I was off to the side looking in, and that sense of being separate was rooted in having a body that was different. This feeling also became my reason for being an artist. My mission as a filmmaker is to make space for people whose bodies are different: people who haven't seen themselves—ourselves—on screen, as beautiful and powerful. In my 25 years of filmmaking, I hadn't made a film specifically about my kind of body and I didn't even know what that was.

It all started out when I went to visit my dad. I inherited my physique from him, but I had never tried to understand what my dwarf-ish body is, what it means, if it fits into a category, or if there are other people like me.

What do you mean when you say ‘dwarfish’?

I have shorter arms and legs. I was bullied as a kid because of that. People called me all kinds of things: Oompa Loompa, midget nicknames. People would stop me on the street and ask me what was wrong with my body or what I was. It was very present in my life that I was different in that way. I wasn't necessarily destined to be a ballerina or a gymnast—things I dreamed of being as a little kid. I was just always told either by family or dance teachers or coaches that “you don't have the right kind of body for that. You're not going to be able to do that.”

Did you initially feel like you were part of the little people community? What did it feel like to yet again be different -- be taller than most LPs?

Walking in the door of LPA (Little People of America) was truly an electric experience. It's a very common LP experience I've come to learn. On one hand, I had never been the tallest person in the room, which made me feel like maybe I didn't belong. But at the same time, I'd never been surrounded by people whose bodies, whose butts and thighs and calves were the same shape as mine and my dad's and my grandma's. At first I kept my personal question of belonging close to my chest, but then, when I started mentioning to other LPs my grandma and dad having the same body type that we were possibly undiagnosed -- as soon as I mentioned that to anyone in the LPA community - they responded with “Welcome, there's a place for you here.”

How did questions about pharmaceutical and medical treatments figure into the early storytelling of the film?

It all happened sort of simultaneously - the learning about pharma, starting to become part of the community, and my diagnosis of finding out that yes, I do have a form of dwarfism. But early on, learning about these pharma treatments gave me a degree of courage, in a journalistic sense, to go to LPA. I always felt that I wasn't "dwarf enough" to just walk in the door, but when I found out about pharma, I felt I had a calling or "excuse" - a "story to cover." My thought was, maybe by doing that, I can find out if I fit at LPA. So at first, my personal question was more of an ulterior motive.

In some ways, the pharma treatments were the catalysts of this whole project. They were also the thing about which I had to learn the most. I knew they would be controversial. What I didn't understand was the long history of medical treatment of dwarfism and the different kinds of mishaps and abuses that happened along the way. I also didn't understand how that medical history was tied to a representational history. A history of LPs being seen as entertainment, and how being seen as a specimen and entertainment are connected.

As I became part of the community, I started feeling not only other people's pushback but my own. I wanted to close the curtain on this attempt to showcase dwarf trauma and pain around difference and medical perspectives. I realized there was something prurient to the idea: "let's see people who are taking the drug now and how it is for them." I realized I didn't actually want to center those stories in the film. And instead, what I wanted to do was represent pharma as I experienced it within the community as a presence that had been there over history that was very much there, but kind of more like a phantom floating in the air surrounding us - a political reality.

Can you talk about diagnosis and how it relates to power and identity?
Diagnosis can be something that can be something we can claim as a really powerful identity and basis of friendship, shared experience and understanding of the position of being on the outside, being different, being a different size than the standard sizes that the built world assumes that we have.

Diagnosis is a term that gets used in so many different ways simultaneously. Conventionally, we think of it as defining "a problem to be fixed." But for me, having a diagnosis is super empowering because it validates or corroborates something that I was never quite sure of - I wasn't sure if I was imagining it. And that's a big part of the experience of being an in-betweener. Having a clear diagnosis can be powerful for most little people because it can be a step to getting the medical care that you need and taking control over your medical treatment and what role it takes, and what role it has in your life.

How was being "in between" a driving narrative force or impulse to make this film?
For me, it's that experience of not fitting in has revealed to me that there are hierarchies and injustices in the world, and I understand those in a specific way because of being both/and neither/nor. There's something really powerful about being an insider and an outsider - it means you can connect things and move between different groups, that it's possible to witness, relate, and learn across lines. The lines around categories in our world have been drawn so black and white, and I feel being in between is a superpower. On the other hand, it's so uncomfortable.

Can you discuss what it means to "see differently" in the way you represent little people, and how that changes over the course of the film?
Over the course of the film, my gaze as the filmmaker and the film's way of looking at little people changes and evolves. It tracks my process of becoming connected to the community. The film literally tells the story of opening up the means of production to the people in the film and moves from my

personal solo perspective to a shared perspective. I ask the question - how do the film participants see the world and want to show themselves- and, to some extent, I allow them to decide.

I learned through lots of trial and error in the edit that If the audience doesn’t have a reason to be there, like a personally loaded and vulnerable reason to be there, ie me asking - is there a place for me here? Can I belong? - then the camera is just doing the same thing that Hollywood and documentary and ethnography have always done, looking from the outside in an othering and extractive way.

How would you describe the different gaze the film finds? What does it show us that’s different?

Overall, the goal was to kind of make things together with the people in the film. Like instead of, can I make a film about you? The question is, can we make a film together ?I never wanted to have an invisible camera -- I always want to be pretty mindful that this footage comes from an act of working together or being in a situation in which we know the camera's there.

There's a legacy of little people serving to entertain average height people. And that gaze informs directors, producers, studios, painters. LPs are filmed to serve average height people’s (APs) purposes, to make APs look bigger and stronger, or to just have someone to laugh at. There are all kinds of narratives. Artists have always been interested in depicting LPs, but they're all coming from an outside perspective that says that it is unnatural to be this size, this shape, this physique. They're not coming from within the experience of how is it to just live and move in this body—just in its own right or in relationship to a world that's built to not to your scale. It's an outside gaze.

How did you think about showing us images - we see paintings, photographs, etc - that are part of a harmful legacy of putting LPs on display.

It was so exciting to find some of the archival footage we found - behind the scenes in early 20th C circuses. The circus imagery that's mostly circulating is the performance footage where you see what's happening for the camera, for the audience. This material was on the back lots and you get a sense of the life and livelihood there and just people hanging out off hours together. And even though it's a short piece in the film, it's to me close to the a heart of the film's purpose: to bear witness to these lives that we don't know about.

These images have been quiet and there are lives, bodies, histories that have just survived as decoration - so we don’t know what is life like from their perspective? And I think that's the kind of autonomy we try to imagine and sort of flesh out. Why performance? Because actors and performers are people who are going to step into and try to use their bodies and emotions to suggest, to conjure, to render a possible version of a life that has been not even imagined. It's not just that it's been forgotten; it's that even to wonder what it was has been forgotten.

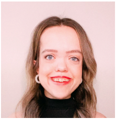
What were the values imbued in making this film, and where do those values come from?

Consent and collaboration are pretty important values in production. I invited the people in the film to participate, and I took their responses seriously and and then we also created an advisory board of people who were not in the film, from communities represented, to be another kind of inside outside eye to the film, and who could talk about what these stories and images meant, what we were missing, to help us meet our own aspirations

PARTICIPANT BIOS:

Sofiya Cheyenne - Sofiya Cheyenne is a New York based multi-disciplinary artivist, community organizer and public speaker. She believes deeply in amplifying the voices and stories of disabled peoples through art.

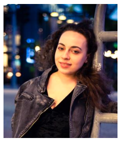
Rebecca Cokley is the program officer for the foundation's first-ever U.S. Disability Rights program, which is focused on strengthening the field, building a pipeline of diverse leadership, promoting disability pride, and mobilizing resources toward disability rights work.



Chandler Crews is the founder of The Chandler Project, a patient advocacy group for those with achondroplasia and other forms of skeletal dysplasia

Sarah Folkins - is an actress and advocate with an MFA in Acting from The New School NYC. Currently she is finishing her second Masters studying to be a Rehabilitation Counselor. Sarah is located in New York City, where she has appeared on Netflix Series "Manifest" as well as worked at The Public Theatre and the Metropolitan Opera. She believes that art is a way to heal, communicate, and emote.

Matthew Jeffers - is an NY based actor best known for his recurring role on ABC's *New Amsterdam* and principal role in feature film *Unidentified Objects*. See IMDB link for more information



Katrina Kemp - "Katrina "Kueen" Kemp is a tiny, intuitive enchantress, heavily influenced by her upbringing in the 818 valley of Los Angeles. An endless Piscean well of pop culture knowledge and juxtaposing aesthetics—Kemp's focus is to change karmic cycles trapped in spaces by ableist perfectionism. Her work celebrates mysticism, hustle culture, and exploring divine feminine+masculine eroticism related to dwarf bodies that have been idolized, portraited and worshiped throughout many ancient civilizations for thousands of years.

Mark Povinelli - has appeared in over 60 films and television shows, 25 theater productions and dozens of national commercials, proving himself capable of spanning the entire range of medium, style and genre. His most notable films include *Nightmare Alley, Water For Elephants*, *Mirror Mirror, The Hot Flashes*, and *My Dinner With Herve*. Along with guest starring on such notable TV shows as *Modern Family, Criminal Minds, Boardwalk Empire, Charmed* and *Frasier*, Mark became the first little person cast as a series regular on a network sitcom in *Are You There, Chelsea*? He's also widely known for his turn as The Cat in the Amazon limited series *Mad Dogs*. He is currently performing solo full length play The Return of Benjamin Lay.

Aubrey Smalls - is a filmmaker with dwarfism. Born in Louisiana, and based in Phoenix, Smalls has over a decade of professional experience ranging from circus arts, theater, dance, and film and television. Currently, Smalls is focused on telling original fiction and non-fiction stories that highlight artists with dwarfism.

FILM TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

JULIE FORREST WYMAN, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, WRITER| Bay Area, CA

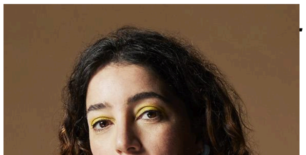
Julie Forrest Wyman's work engages issues of embodiment, body image, and the possibilities and problematics of media spectatorship - all informed by her experience of living with hypochondroplasia dwarfism. Her 2012 documentary STRONG! premiered at AFI Silverdocs and was broadcast nationally on PBS's Emmy award winning series, Independent Lens, where it won the series' Audience Award. Wyman's work has been awarded support from Sundance, Sandbox, IDA, SF Film Society, Points North, ITVS, the Creative Capital Foundation, The Princess Grace Foundation, California Humanities and NEH. She has been a fellow at the UC Davis Feminist Research Institute and a resident of SF Film Society's Filmhouse, Siena Art Institute, Logan Nonfiction and Points North. Her films, including FatMob (2016) Buoyant (2005) and A Boy Named Sue (2000), have aired on Showtime, MTV's LOGO-TV, and have been exhibited on five continents. She serves as Associate Professor of Cinema and Digital Media at UC Davis.

LINDSEY DRYDEN , PRODUCER | Austin TX & UK

Lindsey (she/her) is an Emmy® award-winning filmmaker. A 2024 Concordia Fellow, she is writer/director of THE CALLERS (2024, Frameline/Criterion Channel/Queer Futures); LOST AND SOUND (2012, SXSW); JACKIE KAY: ONE PERSON, TWO NAMES (2017, Tate Queer British Art), and CLOSE YOUR EYES AND LOOK AT ME (2009, True/False). She produced Academy Award shortlisted, Sundance Special Jury Award-winning UNREST (2017, PBS/Netflix) and 2x Webby- and Emmy-winning TRANS IN AMERICA: TEXAS STRONG (2019, ACLU / CondeNast). She executive produced BIFA-nominated THE FORGOTTEN C (2020, Uncertain Kingdom) and AHEAD OF THE CURVE (2020, Starz/Netflix), and consulted on DEAF PRESIDENT NOW! (2025, Sundance/Apple TV+). Lindsey is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and BAFTA, a former Filmmaker-In-Residence at Jacob Burns Film Center, and a Sundance Institute Documentary Producers Lab Fellow. She is a proud co-founder of FWD-Doc: Filmmakers with Disabilities.

SHALEECE HAAS , PRODUCER | Los Angeles

Shaleece is an Emmy Award-winning documentary producer and director based in Los Angeles. Producing credits include DELIKADO (2022; Hot Docs; POV); ASIAN AMERICANS: BREAKING THROUGH (PBS, 2020 Peabody Award); and TRANS IN AMERICA: TEXAS STRONG (SXSW; 2018 Emmy Award). Directing credits include REAL BOY (PBS/*Independent Lens*, 2017), which won 20 festival awards; and the animated short TO THE FUTURE, WITH LOVE (POV Shorts, 2021). Shaleece has been an Impact Partners Producing Fellow, a Film Independent Documentary Lab Fellow, and is a proud member of Film Fatales, New Day Films, and the Queer Producer's Collective. In addition to her work as a filmmaker, Shaleece is a certified somatic practitioner and facilitator supporting creatives and changemakers. She also supports documentary filmmakers as a somatic coach and film supervisor at Film in Mind, a UK-based organization providing therapeutic support for the film industry.



JONNA MCKONE, PRODUCER | Baltimore & NYC

Jonna is an artist and filmmaker whose work combines documentary, archives, and materials-based processes to explore themes of memory, power and land. Jonna's first feature as a producer, ALL LIGHT, EVERYWHERE (Neon, Hulu) won a US Documentary Special Jury Prize for nonfiction experimentation. Most recently she produced THE TALLEST DWARF (SXSW, 2025), MARGIE SOUDEK'S SALT & PEPPER SHAKERS (Sundance, 2023, The New Yorker)*;* and the hybrid fiction film YOUR FINAL MEDITATION (Rockaway, 2024). Her films have been supported by Sandbox Films, Sundance, Ford Foundation|Just Films, SFFILM, Princess Grace, ITVS, Cinereach, and IDA, among others. Jonna is also a photographer whose work has shown in galleries around the US. She was a Center for Documentary Studies Lewis Hine Fellow, a Flaherty Film Seminar, a Points North Institute Fellow, a 2023 DOC NYC 40 Under 40 filmmaker, as well as an artist-in-residence at Monson Arts' Photo Residency and Skidmore's Storytellers Institute.

DEBRA SCHAFFNER, EDITOR & WRITER | Oakland, CA

Debra is a filmmaker who weaves reality, memory and imagined worlds to reveal deeper, stranger truths beyond the confines of traditional storytelling. Raised by robots in the suburbs of New Jersey, she eventually made her way west where she worked as a bike messenger, carpenter, and sound designer before finding her voice as a filmmaker and video editor. Editor credits include FREE FOR ALL: The Public Library (INDEPENDENT LENS, 2025) and CELEBRITY EXPLORERS (2018) which was awarded Best Series by the Wildlife Conservation Film Festival (2018). Her work has aired on PBS, Cartoon Network and screened at FRAMELINE and DOCS/MX. Debra is currently directing her first feature, CURSE OF THE MUTANT HEIRLOOM, a hybrid documentary supported by BAVC MediaMaker, SFFILM, Jewish Film Institute, Jewish Story Partners, California Humanities, and the Berkeley Film Foundation.

MAYA DAISY HAWKE, CONSULTING EDITOR | UK

Maya Daisy Hawke is credited as Editor on Oscar, BAFTA and double Sundance Audience Award-winning Navalny (2022) and Sundance award-winning and Oscar-nominated Sugarcane (2024). She was the Consulting Editor on BAFTA and Oscar-nominated Black Box Diaries. She was Supervising Editor on Joonam (Sundance US Doc Competition 2023). Upcoming projects include feature docs: River of Grass, How Deep Is Your Love, The Dating Game, and How To Build A Library. Her own experimental films have been exhibited at MoMi, Sundance, ICA Frames of Representation, LACMA, Camden International FF and IDFA. She is the co-director, with Joe Bini, of Little Ethiopia, a live documentary included on the IDA's list of Best Docs of the Decade. She has been an advisor at seven Sundance Institute Labs and a fellow at the Sundance Non-fiction Directors Residency. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences.

THE OCTOPUS PROJECT, COMPOSER | Austin, TX

Josh Lambert, Yvonne Lambert and Toto Miranda are the co-founders and core members of the multidisciplinary Austin, TX band, The Octopus Project. Since beginning in 1999, the group has released six studio albums, garnering praise from the likes of Rolling Stone, Pitchfork and The New York Times, toured clubs and festivals worldwide (Coachella, Lollapalooza, Austin City Limits), created a series of immersive performance/installation works and composed music for video games, commercials and feature films. In 2014, the band was awarded Sundance's Special Jury Award for Musical Score for their work on the film *Kumiko, the Treasure Hunter* (starring Rinko Kikuchi). Their most recent film work includes 2024's *Sasquatch Sunset* (directed by Zellner Bros., starring Jesse Eisenberg & Riley Keough) and 2025's *The Tallest Dwarf* (directed by Julie Wyman).

SOFIYA CHEYENNE, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER & FILM PARTICIPANT | NYC

(See Above)

NIC NOVICKI, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER | Los Angeles

Nic Novicki is an comedian, actor, and producer that has performed on 6 continents including several tours through Armed Forces Entertainment, performing for troops. His television credits include: Boardwalk Empire, The Good Doctor, The Sopranos, Loudermilk, Alone Together, Gotham Comedy Live, Jack and Triumph, The Neighbors, Austin and Alley, Private Practice, Drop Dead Diva. He has appeared in several movies including: Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse, Marry Me, L!fe Happens, November Rule, The Last 5 Years, Boston Girls, Breaking Wind, Dead Ant and the upcoming BitterSweet. He is the founder and director of the Easterseals Disability Film Challenge and is a board member of Easterseals Southern California.

JESS DEVANEY, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER | NYC

Jess Devaney (they/she) is Founder & President of Multitude Films. Their latest films include Yance Ford's Netflix Original POWER (Sundance 2024); Oscar-shortlisted HBO Documentary Films Original HOW WE GET FREE ; the Indigo Girls documentary IT'S ONLY LIFE AFTER ALL (Sundance 2023); Emmy-winning Peacock Original LOWNDES COUNTY AND THE ROAD TO BLACK POWER (Tribeca 2022); Emmy-nominated Netflix Original PRAY AWAY (Tribeca 2020); Oscar-shortlisted CALL CENTER BLUES (Topic Studios); and APART, the Emmy-winning episode of the series THROUGH OUR EYES (HBO Max). Jess created the QUEER FUTURES series and produced Sundance Award-winning and IDA-nominated ALWAYS IN SEASON (Independent Lens) as well as THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED (POV). Jess founded QueerDoc, was a Sundance Institute Documentary Edit and Story Lab fellow, and Sundance Institute Creative Producing Lab advisor. They have been recognized with the Cinereach Producers Award and the 2023 Sundance Institute Amazon Studios Nonfiction Producers Award. Multitude Films' latest feature LIFE AFTER premiered in competition at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival.

ANYA ROUS, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER | MULTITUDE FILMS | NYC

Anya Rous (she/her) is a Producer and Vice President of Multitude Films. Her latest films include IT'S ONLY LIFE AFTER ALL (Sundance 2023); Emmy-winning Peacock Original LOWNDES COUNTY AND THE ROAD TO BLACK POWER, in partnership with Participant and *The Atlantic* (Tribeca 2022); Critic's Choice nominee Netflix Original PRAY AWAY, in partnership with Ryan Murphy and Blumhouse (Telluride, Tribeca 2020); as well as APART, the Emmy-winning episode of the HBO Max series THROUGH OUR EYES, in partnership with Sesame Workshop. She executive produced MILISUTHANDO (Sundance 2023), HOW WE GET FREE (HBO 2023), and QUEER FUTURES (CPH:Dox 2023); and co-produced ALWAYS IN SEASON (Independent Lens 2020) and Livingston Award-winning THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED (Tribeca 2018, POV). Anya advises on impact strategy and leads a movement orientation within the company's producing model where films are drivers of culture change. Anya was a Sundance Creative Producing Fellow, an Impact Partners Documentary Producing Fellow, a 2020–2021 DOC NYC 40 Under 40 filmmaker, and a 2021 Gotham/Cannes Producers Network Fellow.

- Things to Know - for IN Person Interviews

- Little People of America recommends, “Such terms as dwarf, little person, LP, and person of short stature are all acceptable, but most people would rather be referred to by their name than by a label.”

- **The term “Midget” should NEVER be used to describe LPs / people with dwarfism** - and is considered highly offensive, etymologically tied to the word “flea” and anchored in a history of little people being ogled and oppressed in freak shows. In LP community this is referred to as “the M-word”

- The word “dwarf” is a reclaimed term that ties to seeing dwarfism as a culture - not a condition. The preferred plural is “dwarfs” NOT “dwarves”. It’s important to LPs that this name refers to our culture and a difference of which many are proud. To be safe, please do not refer to an individual as a “dwarf” unless a person explicitly describes themself this way and instead use dwarf as a descriptor of community and identity

- “Dwarfism” refers broadly to a category of skeletal dysplasia medical conditions (there are over 400) and can be used in reference to “person first language,” ie “person with dwarfism,” or when and if discussing specifics of diagnosis, ie “what form of dwarfism do you have?” A caveat is that most LPs do not wish to answer that question unless it is relevant to circumstances or within an ongoing conversation, ie please do not greet a new LP with personal medical questions like this one.

- Average Height: we describe people without dwarfism as “Average Height,” abbreviated as AH and sometimes spoken as “AP” (average height person) as a counterpoint to LP.

- If you’re unsure about language to use, refer to the National Center on Disability and Journalism’s *Disability Language Style Guide*: https://ncdj.org/style-guide/

- Refer to a person’s disability only when it’s relevant to the story.

- Use the words “disability” and “disabled” (when relevant). Other terms like “differently-abled”, “special needs”, “handicapable”, “impaired”, “wheelchair-bound”, “disorder”, “abnormality” and “special” are problematic. The word “condition” (which is neutral) can be useful instead of “impairment” (which has negative connotations).

- Avoid Inspiration Porn and Pity Porn: Framing disabled people as inspiring, courageous, pitiful etc simply for existing with disabilities is dehumanizing, paternalistic and Othering. The media at large has perpetuated these simplistic ideas to the detriment of disabled people. Check out funny, powerful TEDTalk:

- People related to or involved in the lives of disabled people are overly represented and usually used as reference-points, if not proxies, to disabled people (i.e. asking a disabled person’s parent or partner to speak about or for them). It is important that disabled people have agency and represent themselves.

Some broader topics (from the National Center on Disability and Journalism):

USE WHEELCHAIR USER, NOT WHEELCHAIR-BOUND/CONFINED TO A WHEELCHAIR

Background: People who use mobility equipment such as a wheelchair, scooter or cane consider the equipment part of their personal space, according to the United Spinal Association. People who use wheelchairs have widely different disabilities and varying abilities.

NCDJ Recommendation: It is acceptable to describe a person as “someone who uses a wheelchair,” followed by an explanation of why the equipment is required. Avoid “confined to a wheelchair” or “wheelchair-bound” as these terms describe a person only in relationship to a piece of equipment. The terms also are misleading, as wheelchairs can liberate people, allowing them to move about, and they are inaccurate, as people who use wheelchairs are not permanently confined to them but are transferred to sleep, sit in chairs, drive cars, etc.

USE NON-DISABLED, NOT ABLE BODIED

Background: This term is used to describe someone who does not identify as having a disability. Some members of the disability community oppose its use because it implies that all people with disabilities lack “able bodies” or the ability to use their bodies well. They may prefer “non-disabled” or “enabled” as being more accurate.

NCDJ Recommendation: The term “non-disabled,” and the phrases “does not have a disability” or “is not living with a disability” are more neutral choices. “Able-bodied” is an appropriate term to use in some cases, such as when referring to government reports on the proportion of able-bodied members in the workforce.

UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

The Social Model was developed by disabled people, and says that people are *disabled by barriers in society*, not by our disabilities or conditions. For example, a person with spina bifida is not disabled by their physical need for a wheelchair, but by the social systems and structures that prevent wheelchairs from accessing buildings, bathrooms, parties, and everything that non-wheelchair users can access. The social model acknowledges that we have built the world for particular types of bodies, and so we’ve privileged and disparaged others. It’s the physical and attitudinal barriers in society – prejudice, lack of access adjustments and systemic exclusion – that disable people. (Of course structural biases are by no means limited to disability; and disability spans every identity.) The social model helps us recognise what can make life harder for disabled people, and encourages us to think structurally about how societies can change, rather than assuming that an individual should ‘fix’ themselves in pursuit of so-called normality and the structures that exclude them.

In contrast, **The Medical Model** comes from the biomedical perception of disability, and focuses on diagnosis, “impairment”, problem or lack. It says that people are disabled by their so-called “impairments” or differences, and that these should be 'fixed' or changed by medical and other treatments, even when they do not cause pain or illness. The Medical Model centers care, cure, welfare and can convey shame and indicate that if someone has an ‘impairment’ their life will be limited, inferior, pitiable or inevitably less valuable. It puts the onus on the personal, not the systemic. To help clarify these ideas, imagine that if a wheelchair user is unable to get into a building because of some steps, the medical model would suggest that this is because of the problem of the wheelchair, rather than the problem of the steps.

UNDERSTAND ABLEISM

"Ableism is is the societal, institutional, and interpersonal discrimination of disabled people,"
More info at https://crutchesandspice.com/ by Imani Barbarin

"A system of assigning value to people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence and fitness… You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism."
More info at https://www.talilalewis.com/blog by Talia A Lewis

Ableism affects us all and it's often perpetuated by inaccurate media representations of disabled people. In media, ableism can look like some of these things:

- Portraying stereotypical characters with disabilities on-screen as objects of tragedy, pity or inspiration
- Assuming that disabled people are broken and want or need to be 'fixed'
- Talking to a person with a disability like they are a child, talking about them instead of directly to them, or speaking for them

RESOURCES & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Little People of America
Easterseals Disability Film Challenge
Ford Foundation Resource (for disabled artists)
Lights! Camera! Access! (for disabled artists)
Stella Young: "I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much."

Directed, Written and Produced by
Julie Wyman

Produced by
Lindsey Dryden, Shaleece Haas, Jonna McKone

Edited & Written by
Debra Schaffner

Original Score by
The Octopus Project

Consulting Editor
Maya Daisy Hawke

Executive Producers
Sofiya Cheyenne, Nic Novicki, Jess Devaney, Anya Rous, Carrie Lozano, Lois Vossen

Featuring
Julie Forrest Wyman
Forrest Paul Wyman
Genevieve McGuffin
Sofiya Cheyenne
Mark Povinelli
Pamela Wyman
Leslye Sneider
Rachel Keller
Ellen Erenea
Chandler Crews
Rebecca Cokley
Aubrey Smalls Taylor
Katrina Kemp
Sarah Folkins
Matthew Jeffers

Additional Participants
Clinton Brown
Stella Causey
Patrick Cokley
Jackson Cokley
Kaya Cokley
Kendrick Cokley
Monique Conley
Annie Danberg

Chris Donovan
Dr. Julie Hoover-Fong
Stefanie Gray
Matt Gray
Lucy Gray
Dr. John Herzenberg
Sarah Catherine Holliman
Cornelius CK Kitrell
Dr. William Mackenzie
Kate Moe
Nic Novicki
Filbert Phoenix Pumpernickel
Julie Rotta
Risa Rifkind
Jackson Santy
Ian Smith
Dr. Shawn Standard
Meg Weber
Tina WongLu

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Colleen Cassingham
Debra Schaffner

Consulting Producer
Helen Hood Scheer

Supervising Producer
Michael Ehrenzweig

Post Production Producer
Brook Holston

Cinematographers
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Jilann Spitzmiller
Debra Schaffner
Anne Etheridge
Tijana Petrovic

Additional Camera
Jess Bennett
Amber Fares
Jen Gilomen
Shaleece Haas
Gaston Yvorra

Julie Forrest Wyman

Production Sound Mixers
Ley Comas
Veralucia Quispe
Shuling Yong
Debra Schaffner
Jenny "Blue" Megli
Sean Solowiej
Javier Briones
Mike Booth

Production Assistants
Jayvonna Corley
Zul Manzi
Mimi Mgawe
Tina WongLu
Johanne Williams-Baron

Production Office Interns
Susana Barron
Haley Rains

Additional Consulting Editors
Todd Chandler
Nels Bangerter

Archival Research
Debra Schaffner
Hannah Shepard

Post Production PA
Hana Beach

Online Editor & Colorist
Robert Arnold | RDAcolor

Original Film Transfers
Movette Film Transfer, San Francisco
Frame Discreet Inc, Toronto

Post Production Sound
IMRSV Sound

Dialogue Editor & Re-recording Mixer	Greg Francis
Supervising Sound Designer	James LeBrecht
Sound Designer & Sound Effects Editor	William Sammons
Audio Post Supervisor	Michel Holbrook, CAS

CREDITS

Voice Talent

Young Julie	Gemma Wyman
VanRomburgh	
Genetic Counselor	Annie Larson
John Wasmuth	L.M. Bogad
Letters	Michelle Alexander
	Liz Canning
	Brook Holston
	Blake Moody
	Tal Mor
	Edan Mor
	Samuael Topiary

Readings of published statements by Scientists were created with AI generative technology.

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Animations by	Lucy Munger
Motion Graphics	Kia Simon | Sneaky Little Sister LLC
Original Score	The Octopus Project Toto Miranda, Yvonne Lambert & Josh Lambert
Captioning	IDC
Audio Description	Ear2Ear
End Titles made with	Endcrawl
DCP by	Cinematiq Digital Lab Services
Production Counsel	Hensley Law Offices | Shannon C. Hensley, Esq.
Clearance Counsel	Klaris | Edward Klaris & Louise Carron
Production Bookkeeper	Bruce Wrigley
Insurance Provided by	Film Emporium, Inc.

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Wellcome Collection (CC BY-NC 4.0)
White Cat Entertainment

LPA DWARF ARTIST COALITION OPEN MIC POETRY BY
Marlena Chertock
Jackson Santy

ADDITIONAL MUSIC

"Wrong Idea"
"Written by Yvonne Lambert, Toto Miranda & Josh Lambert
Performed by The Octopus Project
Courtesy of Robot High School Publishing & Cameron Lamb
from the film, Kumiko, the Treasure Hunter"

"Sunrise"
"Written by Yvonne Lambert, Toto Miranda & Josh Lambert
Performed by The Octopus Project
Courtesy of Robot High School Publishing
from the film, KID-THING"

"Annie""Written by Yvonne Lambert, Toto Miranda & Josh Lambert
Performed by The Octopus Project
Courtesy of Robot High School Publishing
from the film, KID-THING"

"Mendoza"
"Written by Yvonne Lambert, Toto Miranda & Josh Lambert
Performed by The Octopus Project
Courtesy of Robot High School Publishing

from the album, Memory Mirror"

"Toneloop"
"Written by Yvonne Lambert, Toto Miranda, Josh Lambert & Ryan Figg
Performed by The Octopus Project
Courtesy of Robot High School Publishing
from the album, Hexadecagon"

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About

When Fancy Farms is a film company based in Oakland California produces films with an innovative approach to film and body forms. Named as an anagram of their two last names, and obliquely referring to their lush vegetable garden, WFF is operated and directed by Julie Forrest Wyman and Debra Schaffner.