

Department of Visual and Media Arts

Fall 2021 Calendar



bright lights film series

Web: emerson.edu/brightlights

 /BrightLightsEmerson

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 BrightLightsEmerson



All screenings are free and open to the public with a virtual 24 hour screening window starting at 7:00 pm on Wednesdays.

Key

- W** Directed by women
- POC** Directed by or featuring people of color
- EC** Emerson College community
- D** Dealing with disability issues
- I** International cinema
- LGBTQ** Dealing with LGBTQ issues
- SJ** Social justice cinema



A note on accessibility: All Bright Lights films and discussions will include closed captioning for the deaf and hard of hearing, which can be enabled on our streaming platform. All introductions and trailers will have open captions, which will appear for all viewers. We will also have audio description for films as indicated.

The Bright Lights Film Series implemented an advisory in Fall 2019 to notify our community about potentially disturbing content. This information will be made available for those who seek it out at websites.emerson.edu/brightlights/content-advisory.



Thursday, September 23

On These Grounds

SJ **POC** **EC**

Co-presented with the Roxbury International Film Festival, Independent Film Festival Boston, and Emerson College Alumni Association

Directed by Garrett Zevgetis, documentary, English, 108 minutes, USA, 2021

An explosive video goes viral, showing a White school resource officer in South Carolina pull a Black teenager from her school desk and throw her across the floor. An outraged nation divides over who is at fault and what role race played in the incident. Healer-Activist Vivian Anderson uproots her life in NYC and moves to South Carolina to help the girl and dismantle the system behind the "Assault at Spring Valley." To contextualize this incident, geographer Janae Davis treks the surrounding swamps to unearth the overgrown and neglected homes of formerly enslaved people of African descent, drawing a throughline connecting trauma from the past to present. Against the backdrop of a racial reckoning and its deep historical roots, one incident illuminates a persistent American power structure. Discussion with director Garrett Zevgetis, MA '05, and activist Vivian Anderson to follow. **CC**

Racial and carceral justice



Thursday, September 30

Fruits of Labor

SJ **W** **POC**

Co-presented as part of the Boston Latino International Film Festival with the Roxbury International Film Festival, Independent Film Festival Boston, Boston Women's Film Festival, and SEIU Local 888

Directed by Emily Cohen Ibañez, documentary, English and Spanish with English subtitles, 78 minutes, USA, 2021

A Mexican American teenager dreams of graduating high school when increased ICE raids in her community threaten to separate her family and force her to become the breadwinner for her family. She works long days in the strawberry fields and the night shift at a food processing factory. Set in an agricultural town on the central coast of California, *Fruits of Labor* is a coming-of-age story about an American teenager traversing the seen and unseen forces that keep her family trapped in poverty. A lyrical meditation on adolescence, nature, and ancestral forces, the film asks, what does it mean to come into one's power as a working young woman of color in the wealthiest nation in the world? Discussion with director Emily Cohen Ibañez and protagonist Ashley Solis Pavon to follow. **CC**

Immigration, gender and sexuality racial, environmental, and economic justice



Thursday, October 7

A Glitch in the Matrix

D

Co-presented with the Boston Underground Film Festival, Boston SciFi Film Festival, and Independent Film Festival Boston

Directed by Rodney Ascher, documentary, English, 108 minutes, USA, 2021

What if we are living in a simulation, and the world as we know it is not real? To tackle this mind-bending idea, acclaimed filmmaker Rodney Ascher uses a noted speech from Philip K. Dick to dive down the rabbit hole of science, philosophy, and conspiracy theory. Leaving no stone unturned in exploring the unprovable, the film uses contemporary cultural touchstones like *The Matrix*; interviews with real people shrouded in digital avatars; and a wide array of voices, expert and amateur alike. If simulation theory is not science fiction but fact, and life is a video game being played by some unknowable entity, then who are we, really? *A Glitch in the Matrix* attempts to find out. Discussion with writer and director Rodney Ascher and protagonist Paul Gude to follow. **CC**

Mental health and disability justice



Thursday, October 14

United States vs. Reality Winner

SJ **W** **EC**

Co-presented as part of the Boston Women's Film Festival and with Emerson College Alumni Association

Directed by Sonia Kennebeck, English, 94 minutes, USA, 2021

A state of secrets and a ruthless hunt for whistleblowers—this is the story of 25-year-old NSA contractor Reality Winner, who disclosed a document about Russian election interference to the media and became the number one leak target of the Trump administration. Discussion with director Sonia Kennebeck and producer Ines Hofmann Kanna, MA '96, to follow. **CC**

Carceral justice



Thursday, October 21

End of the Line: The Women of Standing Rock

SJ **POC** **W**

Co-presented with the Boston Women's Film Festival, Roxbury International Film Festival, and *Living on Earth* podcast

Directed by Shannon Kring, documentary, English, 87 minutes, USA, 2021

A group of Indigenous women risk their lives to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which jeopardizes their land, water, and entire way of life. Despite the desecration of their ancient burial and prayer sites, violent confrontations, and limited resources, these women refuse to back down. Calls for change reverberate nationally as the women of Standing Rock lead a tireless effort to defend their right to clean water and rich heritage. Discussion with director Shannon Kring to follow. **CC**

Gender and sexuality, racial, environmental, and economic justice



Thursday, October 28

malni-towards the ocean, towards the shore

SJ **POC**

Co-presented with the Roxbury International Film Festival, *Living on Earth* podcast, DocYard, and Emerson Contemporary

Directed by Sky Hopinka, documentary, chinuk wawa with English subtitles, 82 minutes, USA, 2021

This film follows Sweetwater Sahme and Jordan Mercier's wanderings through each of their worlds as they wander through and contemplate the afterlife, rebirth, and the place in-between. Spoken mostly in chinuk wawa,

their stories are departures from the Chinookan origin of death myth, with its distant beginning and circular shape. Discussion with writer and director Sky Hopinka to follow. [CC](#)

Racial and environmental justice



Thursday, November 4

Soy Cubana

[POC](#) [I](#) [EC](#)

Co-presented with the Boston Latino International Film Festival, Roxbury International Film Festival, and Emerson College Alumni Association

Directed by Ivaylo Getov and Jeremy Ungar, documentary, English and Spanish with English subtitles, 96 minutes, USA, 2021

In 2017, the all-female Cuban quartet Vocal Vidas were invited to perform its first show in America, just as US-Cuba relations were closing. What began as a concert became a journey across physical and ideological borders: an affirmation of the connective power of music, even in the most uncertain times. Discussion with directors Jeremy Ungar and Ivaylo Getov and producer Robin Miller Ungar '74 to follow. [CC](#)

Racial, gender and sexuality, and immigration justice



Thursday, November 11

Not Going Quietly

[D](#)

Co-presented with the ReelAbilities Boston Film Festival, SEIU Local 888, and Boston Jewish Film

Directed by Nicholas Bruckman, documentary, English, 96 minutes, USA, 2021

A rising star in progressive politics and a new father, 32-year-old Ady Barkan's life is upended when he is diagnosed with ALS. But after a confrontation with powerful Senator Jeff Flake on an airplane goes viral, catapulting him to national fame, Ady and a motley crew of activists ignite a once-in-a-generation political movement called "Be a Hero." Together, they barnstorm across the country and empower people to confront their elected officials with emotional, personal stories with emotional, personal stories to demand healthcare justice, and Ady holds groundbreaking interviews with Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren. Through his journey, Ady discovers that collective action and speaking truth to power offers hope for his family and millions of others. Discussion with director Nicholas Bruckman and activist Liz Jaff to follow. [CC](#) [AD](#)

Mental health and disability and economic justice



Thursday, November 18

No Ordinary Man

[SJ](#) [W](#) [LGBTQ](#) [POC](#)

Part of Trans Awareness Week

Co-presented with Wicked Queer: The Boston LGBT Film Festival and the Boston Women's Film Festival

Directed by Aisling Chin-Yee and Chase Joynt, documentary, English, 83 minutes, USA, 2021

American jazz musician Billy Tipton developed a reputable touring and recording career in the mid-twentieth century, along with his band The Billy Tipton Trio. After his death in the late '80s, it was revealed that Tipton was assigned female at birth, and his life was swiftly reframed as the story of an ambitious woman passing as a man in pursuit of a music career. The genre-defying documentary *No Ordinary Man* seeks to correct that misrepresentation by collaborating with trans artists. As they collectively celebrate Tipton's story as a musician living his life according to his own terms, they paint a portrait of a trans culture icon. Discussion with writer and directors Aisling Chin-Yee and Chase Joynt to follow. [CC](#)

Gender and sexuality justice

The cinema will be dark on Thursday, November 25, in observance of Thanksgiving.



Thursday, December 2

No Straight Lines: The Rise of Queer Comics

[SJ](#) [W](#) [LGBTQ](#) [D](#) [POC](#)

Co-presented with Wicked Queer: The Boston LGBT Film Festival and the Boston Women's Film Festival

Directed by Vivian Kleiman, documentary, English and Spanish with English subtitles, 79 minutes, USA, 2021

No Straight Lines tells the story of five scrappy and pioneering cartoonists who depicted everything from the AIDS crisis, coming out, and same-sex marriage, to themes of race, gender, and disability. They tackled the humor in queer lives in a changing world and the everyday pursuits of love, sex, and community. Their work is funny, smart, and profound, and provides a unique, uncensored window into LGBTQ lives from the 1970s onward, beginning at a time in which there was no other genuine queer storytelling in popular culture. Equally engaging are their personal journeys, as they, against all odds, helped build a queer comics underground that has been able to grow and evolve in remarkable ways. Discussion with director Vivian Kleiman and comic artists Rupert Kinnard and Jennifer Camper to follow. [CC](#)

Gender and sexuality and racial justice



Thursday, December 9

Poly Styrene: I Am a Cliché

[SJ](#) [POC](#) [I](#) [W](#) [D](#)

Co-presented with the Boston Underground Film Festival, Roxbury International Film Festival, Boston Women's Film Festival, and Independent Film Festival Boston

Directed by Celeste Bell and Paul Sng, documentary, English, 96 minutes, UK, 2021

Poly Styrene was the first woman of color in the UK to front a successful rock band. She introduced the world to a new sound of rebellion, using her unconventional voice to sing about identity, consumerism, postmodernism, and everything she saw unfolding in late 1970s Britain, with a rare prescience. As the frontwoman of X-Ray Spex, the Anglo-Somali punk musician was also a key inspiration for the riot grrrl and Afropunk movements. But the late punk maverick didn't just leave behind an immense cultural footprint. Poly was survived by a daughter, Celeste Bell. Celeste became the unwitting guardian of her mother's legacy and her mother's demons. Misogyny, racism, and mental illness plagued Poly's life, while their lasting trauma scarred Celeste's childhood and the pair's relationship. Discussion with writer and directors Celeste Bell and Paul Sng to follow. [CC](#)

Gender and sexuality, racial, and disability justice



Thursday, December 16

The Gig Is Up

[W](#) [I](#) [POC](#)

Co-presented with the Independent Film Festival Boston, Boston SciFi Film Festival, Boston Women's Film Festival, *Living on Earth* podcast, and SEIU Local 888

Directed by Shannon Walsh, documentary, English, 88 minutes, Canada, 2021

From delivering food and driving ride shares to tagging images for AI, millions of people around the world are finding work task by task online. The gig economy is worth over 5 trillion USD globally and growing. And yet the stories of the workers behind this tech revolution have gone largely neglected. Who are the people in this shadow workforce? *The Gig Is Up* brings their stories into the light. Lured by the promise of flexible work hours, independence, and control over time and money, workers from around the world have found a very different reality. Work conditions are often dangerous, pay often changes without notice, and workers can effectively be fired through deactivation or a bad rating. Through an engaging global cast of characters, *The Gig Is Up* reveals how the magic of technology we are being sold might not be magic at all. Discussion with director Shannon Walsh to follow. [CC](#)

Economic and environmental justice



bright lights film series

The Bright Lights series will be taking place in a virtual Bright Family Screening Room space for the fall semester. These screenings will be available for a 24-hour window followed by a live 45-minute moderated discussion. There will be an opportunity for the audience to participate and submit questions. We will be screening 12 films with a focus on social justice, including films dealing with racial, economic, environmental, mental health and disability, gender and sexuality, carceral, and immigration justice. I hope you will join us for these crucial conversations.

The Bright Lights Film Series is sponsored by the Department of Visual and Media Arts at Emerson College. The mission of the series is to create community through cinema and welcomes both Emerson faculty, students, and staff as well as the general public. Bright Lights seeks to create an environment where cinema is not only viewed and appreciated but where a dialogue is fostered and a community of media makers, academics, and aficionados are engaged and supported. The series is committed to screening at least 50 percent of films directed by women and crafting a diverse program including BIPOC filmmakers, queer cinema, and films dealing with disability.

Screenings will be available for a 24-hour window beginning at 7:00 pm EST on Wednesdays and the conversations will occur at 7:00 pm EST on Thursdays during the semester. Sessions are always free and open to the public, and attendance is capped at 175. This series is curated and managed by the head of film exhibition and festival programs, Anna Feder.

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