



# ST within RIES

A FILM BY THE AUSTIN ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

UNRAVAL PICTURES AND AUSTIN ASIAN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL PRESENTS  
"STORIES WITHIN" PRODUCED BY HANNA HUANG ANDREW LEE LILLI HIME DIRECTED BY PJ RAVAL EDITED BY ARIEL QUINTANS WRITTEN BY LILLI HIME JENNY TINGHUI ZHANG  
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY IVY CHIU HUA LIU ANDY L. CANEVA BY ROGER TAM SOUND BY KEVIN CHIN KEITH CHEN ART BY MAXWELL VELA DESIGN BY YEN TAN





# STORIES WITHIN

**A FILM BY THE AUSTIN ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

Directed by PJ Raval

2022, United States, English

Screening Formats Available: Apple Pro Res, DCP

Contact:

Third World Newsreel

545 8th Avenue, Suite 550, New York, NY 10018

(212) 947-9277 x 10, [tw@tw.org](mailto:tw@tw.org)

Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/561959238>

IG: [instagram.com/aapistorieswithin/](https://www.instagram.com/aapistorieswithin/)

FB: [facebook.com/aapistorieswithin](https://www.facebook.com/aapistorieswithin)

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Stories Within delves into a diverse cross section of 14 individuals from the AAPI community in Austin. It allows each participant the opportunity to speak to their younger selves about the acts of racism and discrimination they'll face and messages of empowerment to bring with them to the present. The series shatters the notion that Asian Americans have homogenous experiences and backgrounds. Stories Within is a community-led and created project from Austin, TX created in the aftermath of the March 2021 Georgia Asian Spa Shootings and during a heightened time of the pandemic-related rise in hate crimes against Asians.

Select participants from the series include:

**Amy** (she/her) - 60s, Chinese American from Hong Kong, a community leader who has run and operated the Austin Asian American Cultural Center for over 20 years.

**Khushboo** (she/her) - 20s, queer, Muslim first-generation Gujarati and Pakistani woman who speaks on accepting her intersectional identities and grieving family members' deportations.

**Eric** (he/him) - 40s, Chinese American, University of Texas at Austin Center for Asian American Studies Director and associate professor of African/African American studies who speaks about building a truly antiracist movement and the path of his own antiracist journey.

**Kai** (they/them) - 18 year old trans Hindu who discusses combatting transphobia to find a space for themselves in the South Asian community.

**Lilly** (she/her) - 20s, Chinese American transracial adoptee who overcame being othered to use her voice to speak up for justice through her blog and Youtube channel.

**Kristi** (she/her) - 30s, Vietnamese American immigrant who recalls struggles of being fetishized as Asian woman and working at a local AAPI domestic violence agency .

**Vince** (he/him) - 60s, Filipino American founder of the Central Texas World Tai Chi & Qigong Day who speaks of his Civil Rights and anti-war movement activism, the anti-Asian sentiment around the Vietnam war period, and the fear of being drafted to fight his Asian brothers.

**Erica** (she/her) - 30s, biracial Taiwanese American who is the host and writer of the PBS Digital Show OTHERWORDS, who tells her younger self about growing up to find friends who helped her shed feeling half of anything and embrace her whole, full self.

**Win Win** (he/him) - 30s, Burmese American who poses questions to his younger self of whether it was worth leaving the refugee camp in Thailand for a place where people frown upon refugees taking benefits and resources from the government.

## BIOGRAPHY OF DIRECTOR

PJ Raval is more recently known as an award-winning filmmaker than he is an ex-scientist born on Tax Day. Growing up as a queer, first-generation Filipino American in a small, white, conservative town in California's central valley, PJ's outsider experience greatly shaped his filmmaking practice. PJ's work examines social justice issues through the voices of queer and marginalized subjects. Named one of Out Magazine's 'OUT 100' and IndieWIRE's '25 LGBT Filmmakers on the Rise 2019', PJ's body of film work has been distributed widely internationally and has been supported by the Guggenheim Foundation, Bertha Foundation, Arcus Foundation, Sundance, Center for Asian-American Media, Tribeca Film Institute, Firelight Media, PBS, and the Ford Foundation. PJ is a 2015 Guggenheim Fellow, 2016 Firelight Media Fellow, 2017 Robert Giard Fellow, a 2021 Soros Justice Fellow, a Producers Guild of America member, and a recent member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.

PJ's latest film CALL HER GANDA is a feature documentary following the story of Jennifer Laude, a local transgender woman who was found dead in a motel room in the port city of Olongopo, Philippines with a 19-year-old U.S. marine as the leading suspect. CALL HER GANDA world premiered at the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival followed by an international premiere at HotDocs in Toronto, Canada. The Hollywood Reporter hailed the film "As suspenseful as it is moving", Now Magazine in Canada gave it 4 N's and called it "Unflinching and eye-opening". CALL HER GANDA opened in theaters fall of 2019 earning over a dozen Grand Jury Best Documentary and Audience Choice Awards as well as several critics' awards and nominations including a 2019 GLAAD Media Award, 2019 Gawad Urian Filipino Film Critics Award, and a 2019 Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences Best Documentary nomination. CALL HER GANDA aired on POV reaching millions of PBS viewers across the US and was awarded the 2020 Excellence in Documentary Award by the NLGJA Association of LGBTQ Journalists.

PJ's previous feature documentaries include the ITVS supported documentary BEFORE YOU KNOW IT which follows the lives of three gay senior men (SXSW World Premiere) hailed by indieWIRE as "A crucial new addition to the LGBT doc canon." BEFORE YOU KNOW IT garnered several awards including "Best Documentary Jury Award" at the Reeling Chicago Gay and Lesbian Film Festival as well as the "Audience Award" at both the Austin LGBT Film Festival and Montreal's image + nation 26 Film Festival. BEFORE YOU KNOW screened theatrically in over 50 theaters in the US, Canada and the U.K. and was broadcast as the season finale on America ReFramed on WORLD Channel earning PJ the NLGJA Association of LGBTQ Journalists Excellence in Documentary Award in 2016.

PJ also produced, directed, and shot (alongside collaborator Jay Hodges) the feature documentary TRINIDAD which uncovers Trinidad, Colorado's transformation from Wild West outpost to "sex change capital of the world.." Called "a must see" by Ellen Huang (GLAAD), TRINIDAD won the Cleveland International Film Festival "Documentary Jury Award" and was broadcast on SHOWTIME as well as MTV's LOGO network, STARZ, and Discovery International and continues to reach audiences around the world.

Most recently, PJ produced, directed and shot the award winning short documentary COME & TAKE IT which captures Jessica Jin's transformation from Chinese-American college student into one of America's most irreverent anti-gun violence leaders, creating what some people are calling The Great

Texas Dildo Revolt. Co-directed and co-produced by Ellen Spiro (BODY OF WAR, TROOP 1500) COME & TAKE IT has won several awards including the Audience Awards for Best Documentary Short at the New Orleans Film Festival and Sidewalk Film Festival and is distributed by Grasshopper Film.

In addition to his feature documentary work, PJ also continues to collaborate on a collection of highly charged, not-safe-for-work videos with performer and “provocateur” Paul Soileau (a.k.a. CHRISTEENE) under the name “Three dollar Cinema”. Their work has screened at SXSW, Oberhausen, and various underground, above ground, and art venues internationally. Banned from YOUTUBE and FACEBOOK alike (MmmHm...), their collaborative efforts is best summed up by The Hollywood Reporter as “...something you desperately wish you could un-see...” Their collaborative work was nominated for an Austin Critics Table Award in 2010, and in 2012 PJ and Paul were invited to the CentralTrak Artist Residency Program, University of Texas Dallas to create a new video series based off stories from the Old Testament. The artist residency resulted in the creation of the high-spirited televangelist duo Reverie & Randee also known for their telethon charity work for the queer arts festival OUTsider.

Also an award-winning cinematographer, PJ’s work has earned him awards such as the ASC Charles B. Lang Jr. Heritage Award as well as the Haskell Wexler Award for Best Cinematography. PJ has been featured in American Cinematographer and shot the 2009 Academy Award nominated and 2008 Sundance Film Festival Documentary Grand Jury Award Winner TROUBLE THE WATER produced/directed by Tia Lessin and Carl Deal (FAHRENHEIT 9/11). Manohla Dargis with The New York Times called the film “SUPERB... One of the best American documentaries in recent memory.” PJ’s feature cinematography credits also include, the 2006 Independent Spirit Award nominated narrative feature ROOM (Sundance, Cannes Director’s Fortnight), the Los Angeles Film Festival Narrative Feature Award winner GRETCHEN, and SUNSET STORIES directed by Silas Howard (FX POSE) & Ernesto Foronda (BETTER LUCK TOMORROW).

PJ also lensed FOURPLAY, four true tales about sexual intimacy, his second feature with acclaimed director Kyle Henry (ROOM), executive produced by Michael Stipe and Jim McKay. FOURPLAY TAMPA, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival as well as Sundance, and FOURPLAY SAN FRANCISCO was awarded “Best Narrative Short” at the 2011 NewFest NY LGBTQ Film Festival. PJ also shot HABIBI RASAK KHARBAN a story of forbidden love and the first fiction feature set in Gaza in over 15 years directed by Susan Youssef (Fipresci Prize Best Feature, Winner Best Arab Feature Dubai International Film Festival, Official Selection Venice Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival 2011) as well as PRIMATE CINEMA: APES AS FAMILY the first film created for a chimpanzee audience directed by Rachel Mayeri (Sundance, Berlinale 2013). PJ lensed Bryan Poyser’s highly anticipated feature LOVE & AIR SEX (SXSW, BFI London). Variety praised PJ’s cinematography by writing, “d.p. PJ Raval makes everything else look every bit as professional as a studio comedy, while capturing the flavor of Austin’s most popular bars, restaurants and hangouts.”

PJ is the director behind the community video series Stories Within, an AAPI storytelling project that recently won “Best Documentary Short” at the 2022 DisOrient Film Festival as well as being a Gold House Gold Futures Challenge Award recipient. He is a co-founder and board president of the queer transmedia arts organization OUTsider, and he serves on the leadership team of the Asian American Documentary Network (A-Doc). In his spare time PJ likes to try and take small naps and pretend he knows ballet.

## **FILMMAKER STATEMENT**

As Asian Americans, we have long battled the damaging narratives that we should keep our heads down and internalize discrimination and hate. With the recent rise of anti-Asian violence, a group of us creatives have activated our skills as storytellers to galvanize our communities. By witnessing members of these communities name moments of hate in their own lives, we are collectively confronting racism and exclusion. We hope to change the way we as Asian Americans see ourselves, knowing that our stories are important, and that we are in solidarity with other communities of color.

## **ABOUT AAAFF**

As the fiscal sponsor and programmatic partner of Stories Within, Austin Asian American Film Festival (AAAFF)'s mission is to tell Asian and Asian American stories via media arts and help Asian Americans explore opportunities in cinema.

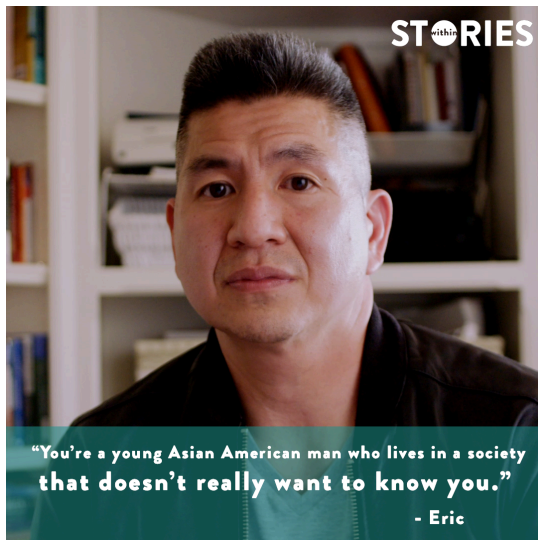
## **SCREENINGS, FESTIVALS & AWARDS**



Gold Futures Challenge Grant, 2022

Best Short Documentary, DisOrient Film Festival, 2022

STILLS & CAPTIONS





STORIES

**“You can break the model minority myth.  
You can break the stereotypes.”**  
- Lilly



STORIES

**“You’ll face many difficulties while  
finding your unique identity...”**  
- Vince



STORIES

**“You will question  
why you are here in the U.S.”**  
-Winwin



## **PRODUCTION CREDITS**

**Stories Within** originally began as a gathering of community leaders to discuss how to support Texas' AAPI community during a heightened time of pandemic-related hate crimes and in the aftermath of the 2021 Asian spa shooting in Georgia. The project evolved from a Stop Asian Hate PSA to its current short documentary film form. The project is in partnership with the Austin Asian American Film Festival (AAAFF), which is also working with Austin Public Library and History Center, Big Medium and Asian American Resource Center.

PJ Raval (Director)

Hanna Huang (Producer)

Andrew Lee (Producer)

Lilli Hime (Writer), and

Jenny Tinghui Zhang (Writer)