

# NYWIFT || New York Women in Film & Television

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NEW YORK WOMEN IN FILM & TELEVISION ANNOUNCES

## 2023 NYWIFT LOREEN ARBUS DISABILITY AWARENESS GRANT OPENS FOR SUBMISSIONS

The most recent grant was awarded to Faith Stongheart for *Faith Brings the Wild*

**NEW YORK, NY – February 13, 2023** – New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) is pleased to announce that the NYWIFT Loreen Arbus Disability Awareness Grant is open for submissions. The film completion grant, now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year, is provided through the generosity of longtime disability rights advocate Loreen Arbus and awards \$6,500 to a woman filmmaker for a film on physical or developmental disability issues.

Courtesy of Michele Spitz, **Woman of Her Word** will produce the winning film's audio description asset as a post-production in kind grant. Her generous donation will allow for the film to be accessible for blind or visually impaired audiences. **ReelAbilities Film Festival**, the largest disabilities film festival in North America, will provide captioning service for the selected film as well as support of the film's outreach and distribution, through the ReelAbilities North American network of festivals and beyond.

Directors and producers are eligible to apply. Films may be of any length or genre. Films must have completed principal photography to be eligible. The grant will be awarded to help a film in the post-production phase. Distributed films are ineligible. Filmmakers must be US-based.

The deadline to apply is March 10, 2023. Apply at <https://bit.ly/3jkwM1L>.

"We at NYWIFT are proud to partner with Loreen Arbus again this year to amplify the voices of those with physical and developmental disabilities. These stories are always strengthened by their honesty, intimacy, and, most importantly, their hope. These films teach us human lessons on endurance and sensitivity from unique points of view. I find them endlessly inspiring and look forward to seeing what this round of submissions has in store," said NYWIFT CEO **Cynthia Lopez**.

"Not only is it important to give incentive to people with disability who are pursuing their dream of becoming filmmakers, but this grant in and of itself raises awareness since it's offered through organizations that have a vibrant membership," said **Loreen Arbus**. "NYWIFT is a preeminent organization in the entertainment industry. My nine grants have visibility throughout the entire country and reach different members of organizations which exponentially increases the number of people who will think about advancing people with disability through their art."

"Over the last several years, I'm both proud and honored to have instated the NYWIFT Media Accessibility Grants that continue to highlight creatives' insightful and meaningful projects by providing equal access for all audiences to experience," said **Michele Spitz**.

The most recent NYWIFT Loreen Arbus Disability Awareness Grant was awarded to Faith Strongheart for her film *Faith Brings the Wild*. Strongheart turns the lens on herself and her family to create a feature documentary that explores the traumatic effects of growing up as a child during the hippie movement, a time filled with abuse and neglect despite the cultural ethos of love and freedom. The film explores what went wrong in the often viewed through “rose colored glasses” hippie movement, specifically the negative and sometimes tragic effects on the children of hippies. Through intimate interviews with family members, Strongheart explores the circumstances around her nearly-fatal burn as a seven-month-old infant. The film unearths deep familial discord that has split the family apart – due to generational trauma, abuse, and addiction. Ultimately, her journey explores how she became permanently disabled at seven months old and how, in mid-life, she is finally coming to terms with her tragic familial past to honestly accept herself as a person living with a disability.

Learn more about NYWIFT grants at <https://www.nywift.org/fund-for-women-filmmakers/>.

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**LINK TO DOWNLOAD PHOTOS:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/xvt71kgatna3cxn4lf9v7/h?dl=0&rlkey=5afiyxovmtmcgvju3vjs256z8>

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**About New York Women in Film & Television:**

New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) connects, educates, and advocates for women to accelerate diversity in media. As the preeminent entertainment industry association for women in New York, NYWIFT energizes women by illuminating their achievements, presenting training and professional development programs, awarding scholarships and grants, and providing access to a supportive community of peers. NYWIFT brings together more than 2,500 women and men working both above and below the line. NYWIFT is part of a network of 60 women in film organizations worldwide, representing more than 15,000 members. NYWIFT is a nonprofit 501c3 public charity.

More information can be found online at: [www.NYWIFT.org](http://www.NYWIFT.org).

Follow on all social media platforms @NYWIFT.

**About Loreen Arbus:**

Loreen Arbus is the President of the Loreen Arbus Foundation, The Goldenson-Arbus Foundation and Loreen Arbus Productions, Inc. Her philanthropy supports a broad scope of interests, including advocacy for women and girls, as well as for the world’s largest minority, people with disabilities. She has established and funds many scholarships that both enhance and elevate social consciousness around her philanthropic interests – scientific and medical research, public policy, the arts, media responsibility, human and animal rights. Arbus holds the distinction of being the first woman to head programming for a U.S. network, a feat accomplished twice (both at Showtime and Cable Health Network/Lifetime). She has been twice nominated for an Emmy. Arbus, widely recognized for her humanitarian and professional

accomplishments, has received The Heart of Giving Award presented by President Bill Clinton in 2001 and was chosen as one (of 40) Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World 2002.

### **About Michele Spitz:**

Michele Spitz of Woman of Her Word is a voiceover artist, producer, public speaker, philanthropist, and influencer most passionate about advocating for media accessibility and disability awareness. Michele is dedicated to selectively funding audio description post-production accessibility grants to ensure that media content is equally accessible to low vision and blind audiences. She has 10 years experience of producing, narrating, consulting, and project managing audio description assets for over 100 projects including film, broadcast and digital media. Michele promotes media accessibility awareness and audience inclusion through ongoing public speaking engagements for film festivals, universities, and various media outlets. She is committed to working closely with film clients to enlist their participation in advocating and promoting their film production's accessibility assets and advise on implementing and incorporating audio description deliverables throughout distribution and exhibition platforms for the shelf life of the film. Among creating audio description for many film genres and various subjects, Michele is a member of NYWIFT instating audio description grants for their annual disability film finishing fund and is also aligned with ReelAbilities, funding audio description film assets for their annual film festivals. Learn more: <https://www.womanofherword.com/>

### **About the Filmmaker:**

Faith Strongheart is an award-winning filmmaker based in Los Angeles. Originally from Santa Fe, New Mexico, Faith received her MFA in directing from UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television and has written, produced and directed several short films which have screened at festivals around the world. In addition, she has written several feature-length screenplays and TV pilots. Faith continues to work as a production manager/supervisor on feature films and short-form nonfiction for Amazon, Apple, Netflix, Sony, Universal and other major and minor studios and production companies, allowing her invaluable access to the imaginative integrity of some of the most visionary filmmakers today.

Faith was a finalist for the Sloan Foundation Fellowship and is a two-time recipient of the Motion Picture Association of America award, a recipient of the Women in Film Verna Fields Memorial Fellowship, the Alliance for Women in Media Scholarship, the Bill Lee Memorial award, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association award for Directing, the Carroll Sax Award in Motion Picture and Television Production and the Charles and Lucille King Family Foundation Scholarship. Her films and writing have won several awards and she has received accolades from numerous sources.

She received the Mary Pickford Award for Documentary Filmmaking for a feature documentary that she is making about how she was nearly fatally burned as an infant while growing up as a child of hippies in the mountains of Northern New Mexico. She is in the development stages of her first feature production, a story about a single mother on the desperate edge of survival and is most recently directed a Covid-19 horror short. Faith was a fellow in the 2020 Respectability Entertainment Lab, a 2021 Black Magic Collective Fellow and was the 2022 recipient of the Loreen Arbus Disability Awareness Grant and is doing her best to raise two small humans in this crazy world.

Learn more at <https://faithstrongheart.com>.

**Press Inquiries:**

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