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NATIONAL FILM PRESERVATION FOUNDATION AWARDS 29 PRESERVATION GRANTS

Groundbreaking films *The Oath of the Sword* and *Santa* Among 64 Films To Be Saved

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San Francisco, CA (June 17, 2021)—The National Film Preservation Foundation today announced grants to save 64 films: including *The Oath of the Sword* (1914), a silent drama by the Japanese American Film Company featuring an all-Japanese leading cast; and the soundtrack for *Santa* (1932), a melodrama directed by Spanish American silent star Antonio Moreno and produced by Azteca Films, a company based in El Paso, Texas that made some of the most acclaimed Mexican movies during the 1930s–50s. *Santa* was one of the first Mexican features with recorded dialogue, and its soundtrack survives in its most complete form on Vitaphone discs. Both of these groundbreaking films illuminate the multicultural and transnational aspects of early American cinema.

Likely the earliest Asian American production, *The Oath of the Sword* tells the story of lovers separated when an ambitious young man leaves his beloved in Japan to study abroad at the University of California, Berkeley. It features one of the first onscreen appearances of Jack Yutaka Abe, who went on to appear in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915) and became a director after returning to Japan in 1925. Denise Khor, an Assistant Professor in the American Studies Department at the University of Massachusetts Boston and author of *Transpacific Convergences: Race, Migration, and Japanese American Film Culture before World War II* (forthcoming UNC Press), located the sole surviving copy of *The Oath of the Sword* at the George Eastman Museum during her research. She approached the NFPF about preserving the film through a partnership between GEM and the Japanese American National Museum. "This collaboration," Professor Khor remarks, "will make publicly available a vital, hidden chapter in the self-representation of Americans from marginalized groups."

Other films greenlit for preservation also shed a light on underseen communities, such as *The Lost Art of the Tlingit of Alaska* (1957), a demonstration of uncommon basket-weaving techniques by a female Tlingit elder; *Negro Durham Marches On* (1948), a portrait of the African American community of Durham, North Carolina, before it was devastated by urban renewal; and 1940s home movies of Tennessee's remote Vardy Valley and its Melungeon residents, filmed by a Presbyterian missionary.

Additional films include *Indian Summer* (1960), a documentary with music by Pete and Mike Seeger on the construction of New York's Cannonsville Reservoir and displacement of local communities; *Morris* (1971), an experimental short edited by pioneering African American filmmaker Hortense "Tee" Beveridge; *Fresh Kill* (1994), an avant-garde activist feature directed by Shu Lea Cheang, featuring Karen Finley and an all-woman camera crew; *The Millionaire Vagrant* (1917), a silent drama about a millionaire who decides to live on six dollars a week, starring Charles Ray, Sylvia Breamer, and John Gilbert; and *A Matter of Respect* (1980), an educational film on teenage pregnancy produced by Blackside Inc., the company that made *Eyes on the Prize*.

Experimental cinema is represented by *End of the Art World* (1971), a documentary by Alexis Krasilovsky, featuring Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg, the first undergraduate student film made by a woman at Yale University; *The Innerview* (1972), a psychedelic feature directed by and starring Richard Beymer; and additional experimental films by Craig Baldwin, Heather McAdams, Toney W. Merritt, and Raphael Montañez Ortiz. Further grant-winners include industrial films from the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, the Cleveland Illuminating Company, and the Barre Granite Association. For a full list click [here](#).

Since its creation by Congress in 1996, the NFPF has provided preservation support to 323 institutions across the country and saved more than 2,613 films through grants and collaborative projects. The grants are made possible by funds authorized through *The Library of Congress Sound Recording and Film Preservation Programs Reauthorization Act of 2016*, secured through the leadership of the Library of Congress, and the contributions of public-spirited donors.

The NFPF preservation grants target newsreels, silent-era films, culturally important home movies, avant-garde films, and endangered independent productions that fall under the radar of commercial preservation programs. The awards provide support to create a film preservation master and two access copies of each work. Films saved through the NFPF programs are used in education and seen widely through screenings, exhibits, DVDs, television broadcasts, and the Internet. A curated selection of the preserved films is available for viewing on the [NFPF website](#), and more than 250 additional titles have been made accessible by our [grant recipients](#).

The grant recipients are:

- American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (NY)
- American Museum of Natural History (NY)
- Anthology Film Archives (NY)
- Atlanta History Center (GA)
- Bessemer Historical Society (CO)
- Canyon Cinema Foundation (CA)
- Chicago Film Archives (IL)
- Chicago Film Society (IL)
- Delaware County Historical Association (NY)
- Durham County Library (NC)
- Emory University (GA)
- George Eastman Museum (NY)
- Hagley Museum (DE)
- Japanese American National Museum (CA)
- Knox County Public Library (TN)
- National Gallery of Art (DC)
- National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution (DC)
- New York University (NY)
- Northeast Historic Film (ME)
- Oklahoma State University (OK)
- Pacific Film Archive (CA)
- Pan Am Historical Foundation (CA)
- Paso del Norte Community Foundation (TX)
- Ted Stevens Foundation (AK)
- UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CA)
- Vermont Granite Museum of Barre (VT)
- Washington University in St. Louis (MO)
- Yale Film Archive (CT)
- Yellowstone National Park Archives (WY)

The National Film Preservation Foundation is the nonprofit organization created by the U.S. Congress to help save America's film heritage. The NFPF is the charitable affiliate of the National Film Preservation Board of the Library of Congress. For a complete list of projects supported by the NFPF, visit the NFPF website: www.filmpreservation.org.