

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****JULY 16, 2025****Leeway Foundation announces its 2025 Media Artist + Activist Residencies**

PHILADELPHIA, PA — Leeway Foundation is proud to announce the 2025 recipients of the Media Artist + Activist Residency (MAR), awarding \$125,000 in funding to five powerful collaborations between women, trans*, and gender nonconforming media artists and social justice organizations across the Greater Philadelphia region.

Now in its fifth year, this residency supports deep-rooted, community-rooted residencies that document, amplify, and mobilize cultural and political movements through the transformative power of media and storytelling. This year's cohort of awardees share a focus on the importance of preservation and documentation as tools for liberatory practices addressing social issues impacting communities on local, state, and global levels. The proposed projects respond to a range of pressing concerns — from housing insecurity and immigrant justice to cultural erasure and divestment from systems of harm — while centering the leadership and lived experiences of Black, immigrant, trans, and LGBTQ+ communities.

The 2025 residency projects span a wide range of media forms including documentary film, video projection, multimedia installations, and digital resource campaigns. Together, they spotlight Philadelphia as a site of visionary organizing and community-rooted care.

This year's awardees are:

[Aisha Mershani](#) will collaborate with [Amistad Law Project](#) to produce *In the Streets*, a public art and storytelling campaign, using wheatpaste photography and audio testimonies to draw powerful connections between resistance movements in Palestine and Philadelphia's fight for decarceration.

[angel shanel edwards](#) will partner with [Black Spatial Relics](#) to expand and document *Black I.O.N (It's Ours Now!)*, a public performance and drama therapy program uplifting court-involved Black youth, by reclaiming city streets as spaces of joy and belonging through video vignettes and public projections.

[Bryheem "Broc" Hawkins](#) will work with [Ark of Safety](#), Philadelphia's first trans-focused TLGBQ+ safe haven, to create a documentary and multimedia archive honoring the lives, brilliance, and resistance of unhoused queer and trans Philadelphians.

[Gabriela Watson-Burkett](#) will join forces with [Centro Integral de la Mujer Madre Tierra](#) to launch *Empowering Madres Latinas*, a multilingual media campaign centering immigrant mothers' stories and organizing power as a force for feminist immigrant justice.

[Melissa Beatriz](#) will collaborate with [People's Budget Office](#) on *Participatory Art and Budgeting*, a short film and digital resource campaign that demystifies Philadelphia's budget process and inspires everyday Philadelphians to engage in civic life through art and protest.

ABOUT THE MEDIA ARTIST + ACTIVIST RESIDENCY

The Media Artist + Activist Residency affirms the vital role of artists in social movements and builds bridges between cultural workers and social justice organizations. By resourcing these media-based collaborations, MAR supports projects that shift narratives, reclaim public space, and advance transformative justice.

Media Artist + Activist Residency applications are evaluated by an independent peer review panel. The 2025 review panel consisted of interdisciplinary artist and filmmaker, [Hagudeza Rullán-Fantauzzi \(LTA '24\)](#); multimedia artist and educator, [Laura Deutch \(MAR '24; ACG '10\)](#); and social justice innovator and movement strategist, Makani Themba.

The Media Artist + Activist Residency was made possible by generous support from our funding partner, the Independence Public Media Foundation.

ABOUT LEEWAY FOUNDATION

The Leeway Foundation supports women, trans*, and gender nonconforming artists and cultural producers working in communities at the intersection of art, culture, and social change. Through our grantmaking and other programs, we promote artistic expression that amplifies the voices of those on the margins, promotes sustainable and healthy communities, and works in the service of movements for economic and social justice. For more information about Leeway, its grant programs, grantees, and events, visit leeway.org.

**Leeway is a trans-affirming organization committed to gender self-determination, and we use the term "trans" in its most inclusive sense, as an umbrella term encompassing transsexual, transgender, genderqueer, Two-Spirit people, and anyone whose gender identity or gender expression is nonconforming and/or different from their gender assigned at birth.*

PRESS CONTACTS:

Bee Knight, Communications Director
bknight@leeway.org

Sophia Pradhan, Communications Assistant
spradhan@leeway.org

LEEWAY FOUNDATION

The Philadelphia Building, 1315 Walnut St., Ste. 832, Philadelphia, PA 19107
leeway.org @leewayfound & @leewayfoundphl 215.545.4078