

## **FREE FILM SERIES AT 2023 FREEP FILM FEST SPOTLIGHTS ASIAN AMERICAN DOCS**

A film series spotlighting the stories and histories of Asian American communities across the country, told by Asian American filmmakers, will be featured at the 2023 Freep Film Festival.

The Asian American Pacific Islander Series includes six full-length documentaries and four short films in a dedicated shorts program. The films are free to attend but requires a reservation, available at [freepfilmfestival.com](http://freepfilmfestival.com).

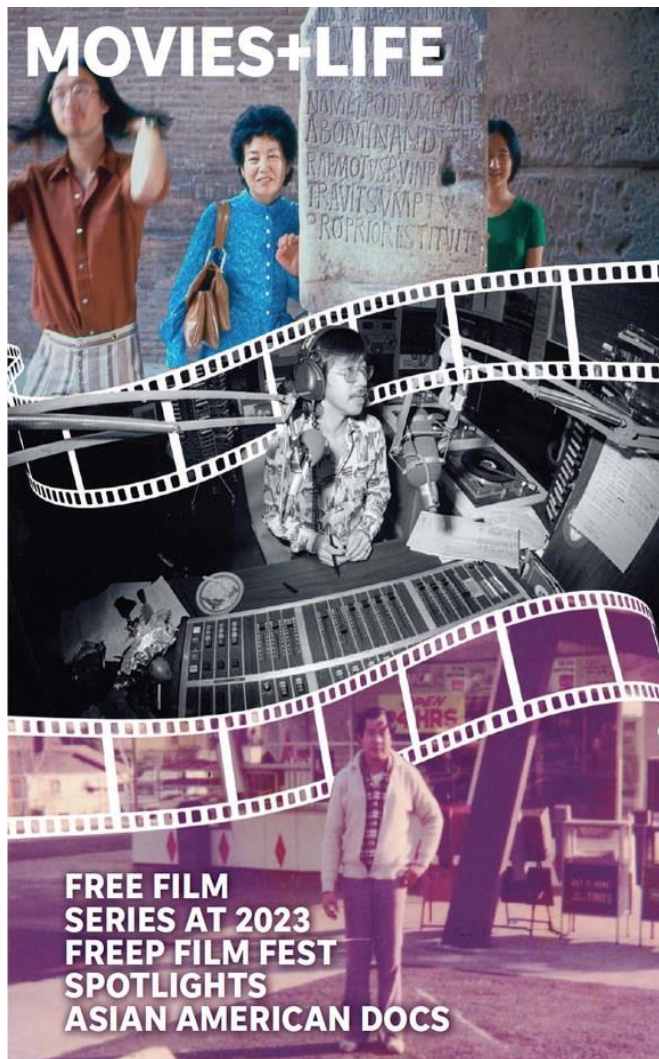
“Detroit is home to one of the most diverse and vibrant Asian-American communities in America, whose experiences profoundly shaped the direction of the U.S. Detroit was home to the author, social activist, philosopher and feminist Grace Lee Boggs, as well as Vincent Chin, who was tragically killed in a hate crime in 1982. Some Asians settled in Detroit as early as 1872 and it is impossible to tell the history of metro Detroit without a consideration of the impact and contributions of Asians and Asian Americans,” said Razi Jafri, a Detroit-based documentary filmmaker and producer, who led the curation of the series.

Jafri, co-director of the documentary “Hamtramck USA,” which screened at the Freep Film Festival in 2021, said he hopes the series will become an annual event in Detroit.

“It's important to bring these documentaries to this festival in metro Detroit to commemorate the vast array of historic and contemporary Asian American experiences. And given the recent spike in anti-Asian violence sweeping across the U.S., they are more important than ever. My hope is that the Asian and Asian American community – a community I am proud to be part of – can relate to and feel inspiration, joy, belonging and representation from viewing these films,” he said.

The films will screen at the Detroit Historical Museum.

The series is produced in collaboration with American Citizens for Justice with additional support from Rising Voices and funding from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission.



Here's a look at the films in the series:

### **'The Donut King'**

Ted Ngoy's story is one of fate, love, survival, hard knocks and redemption. It's the rags to riches story of a refugee escaping Cambodia, arriving in America in 1975 and building an unlikely multi-million-dollar empire baking America's favorite pastry, the donut. Detroit premiere.

After the film: Eden Sabolboro, a Detroit-based producer and director, talks with "The Donut King" director Alice Gu.

*3 p.m. Sun., April 30, Detroit Historical Museum*

### **'Free Chol Soo Lee'**

In 1970s San Francisco, 20-year-old Korean immigrant Chol Soo Lee is racially profiled and convicted of a Chinatown gang murder. After

spending years fighting to survive, investigative journalist K.W. Lee takes a special interest in his case, igniting an unprecedented social justice movement. Michigan premiere.

After the film: Chicago-based writer and director Jason Rhee talks with "Free Chol Soo Lee" co-director Julie Ha and producer Su Kim.

*4 p.m. Fri., April 28, , Detroit Historical Museum*

### **'In Search of Bengali Harlem'**

As a teenager in 1980s Harlem, Alaudin Ullah was swept up in the revolutionary energy of early hip-hop. He rejected his working-class Bangladeshi parents and turned his back on everything South Asian and Muslim. Now, as an actor and playwright in post-9/11 America, Alaudin wants to tell his parents' stories, but has no idea of the lives they led as Muslim immigrants of an earlier era. "In Search of Bengali Harlem" follows Ullah from the streets of New York City to the villages of Bangladesh to uncover the pasts of his father, Habib, and mother, Mohima. Michigan premiere.

After the film: Detroit-based documentary filmmaker and producer Razi Jafri talks with "In Search of Bengali Harlem" co-director Vivek Bald.

*7 p.m. Fri., April 28, Detroit Historical Museum*

### **'LIKE A ROLLING STONE: The Life and Times of Ben Fong-Torres'**

"LIKE A ROLLING STONE: The Life & Times of Ben Fong-Torres" is an inspirational portrait of the life and career of Rolling Stone magazine's first music editor and legendary writer, during the great rock and roll era when music meant more than entertainment. The film is told from Ben's deeply personal point of view from the man who quite literally had the backstage pass. Long overdue - in fact, more than half a century - filmmaker/journalist Suzanne Joe Kai is pleased to finally tell his true story.

Before the film: Filmmaker Suzanne Joe Kai will deliver a keynote talking about her career as an independent filmmaker and awardwinning journalist.

After the film: Writer and producer Kristine Patnugot talks with Kai and producer Doug Blush, an Oscar-winning editor and producer and Michigan native.

*7 p.m. Thurs., April 27, Detroit Historical Museum*

### **'Photographic Justice: The Corky Lee Story'**

For 50 years, Chinese American photographer Corky Lee tirelessly documented Asian Pacific Americans and kept a relentless record of their everyday lives, celebrations and struggles. Director Jennifer Takaki's intimate portrait reveals the triumphs and tragedies of the man who produced a vast collection of compelling photographs that tell the Asian Pacific American story for generations to come.

After the film: Chien-An Yuan, an Ann Arbor

based interdisciplinary performer and visual artist, talks with director Jennifer Takaki. *1 p.m. Fri., April 28, Detroit Historical Museum*

### **'Shorts Program #5: Belonging'**

Culture, identity and food buttress the feeling of community among Asian Americans especially those who have left their home countries and built a life for themselves here in America. In these series of short films, that sense of belonging is sometimes challenged, but also reinforced and celebrated.

"Crossroads": FedEx operates one of its largest US-based hubs in Indianapolis, where over 80% of the employees are South Asian/Punjabi. In April 2021, former Fedex worker Brandon Scott Hole opened fire, killing eight and injuring several others. While the Sikh community grieves the loss of four of its members, the police and FBI conclude their investigations by declaring the mass shooting not a hate crime. "Crossroads" is the story of a community responding to an act of violence, and their right to be safe and treated equally, as Sikhs living in America. Directed by Sarita Khurana. (2022) "Here, Hopefully": A nonbinary aspiring nurse from China strives to build a life in Iowa. After graduating from nursing school, they work tirelessly to pass their licensure exam in hopes of obtaining a work visa. Directed by Hao Zhou. (2023) "Ethan Lim: Cambodian Futures": Cambodian Futures is a densely layered exploration of Cambodian cuisine, historical trauma and an intergenerational family bond. Filmmaker Dustin Nakao-Haider follows Chicagobased chef Ethan Lim as he creates vibrant dishes inspired by the rich, complex history of Cambodia. Directed by Dustin Nakao-Haider. (2023) "38 at the Garden": This short film chronicles the extraordinary ascendance of point guard Jeremy Lin during his landmark 2012 season with the New York Knicks. Lin, an undrafted Harvard graduate, shocked fans, stunned his teammates and galvanized the Asian American community when he scored 38 points at Madison Square Garden against the Los Angeles Lakers, solidifying Lin's hot streak and the "Linsanity" craze. Directed by Frank Chi. (2022) 'Wisdom Gone Wild': "Wisdom Gone Wild" presents a daughter's (Rea Tajiri) evolution towards a new way of seeing aging and mortality

through her 16-year journey as a care partner to her mother who lived with dementia. Michigan premiere.

After the films: David Siev, director of "Bad Axe," talks with the directors.

*4 p.m. Thu., April 27, Detroit Historical Museum*



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