

**LIFT WELCOMES THE PARTICIPANTS  
OF THE NEWCOMER FILMMENTOR 2020 PROGRAM**

**Toronto, May 14, 2020**—The **Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT)** is pleased to welcome four newcomer filmmakers to participate in the **Newcomer Filmmmentor 2020 Program**. In the past few years, we have become aware of an increased interest from newcomers who are either looking to translate their film experiences into a Canadian context or looking to transition into filmmaking. However, the challenges encountered on their part are apparent and understandably overwhelming. Through this mentorship, LIFT hopes to ease their transition process, while bolstering their creative and technical skills.

The participants are **Halime Akturk, Movsar Asuev, Jo Güstin and Darya Ruseva**.

Confirmed mentors are **Coral Aiken, Faraz Anoushahpour, Aeyliyah Husain and Ingrid Veninger**.

*Biographies:*

**Mentee Halime Akturk, Mentor Aeyliyah Husain**

*"I am very happy and excited to be part of this mentorship program. Being a former journalist working on the field, I have witnessed many real-life stories, that have had an impact on my perception of this world. My passion for films have been refined as my eyes witnessed many stories, from the perspective of a field journalist. With guidance of my mentor and support of LIFT, I am motivated to discover the stories of people forcefully pushed into the peripheries of public life and narrate these marginalized experiences through movies to broaden the public sphere to contribute to the society."*

—Halime Akturk

**Halime Akturk:** I have worked as a journalist in Turkey for five years starting from my undergraduate years. Because of being Kurdish and having a highly politicized family, I started to conduct researches on the Kurdish issue in Turkey during my high school education. After graduating from the university my endeavours as a journalist started to cover larger parts of Turkey, including Kurdish cities bordering Turkey in Syria. I made live news throughout disastrous events like Soma Mining Massacre in 2014, ISIS attacks in Kobanê (Kurdish city in Syria), curfews in Kurdish cities in Turkey in 2015; covered long-term issues such as seasonal agricultural workers' living conditions or elections campaigns of political. As a part of my coverage for Kobane, I crossed the border to Syria while the city of Kobane was under attack to conduct interviews with civilians. In July 2016, after I came to Toronto I worked as a volunteer in TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival). I worked with Toronto Academics for Peace organization in their two fundraising activities throughout 2017. Ironically, while I was in Canada and can't return to Turkey, Istanbul Medical Chamber gave me a prestigious award in journalism in the category of Best TV News. I worked at Cognizant as a senior data analyst for 2 years. Currently, I study film at Ryerson University.

**Aeyliya Husain** is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose work focuses on issues of representation, images of war and their interpretation, women, and photography. She has exhibited at festivals both nationally and internationally including, Tribeca Film Festival, San Francisco Docfest, Glasgow Short Film Festival and São Paulo Film Festival. Her latest film "The Fifth Region" had its premiere at imagineNATIVE, in October (2018) and on the Documentary Channel (2020). Her work has been supported by production grants from the National Film Board of Canada, Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council and VICE media. Husain holds an MFA in Film Production from York University (Toronto, Canada) and a BA from the University of Waterloo (Waterloo, Canada).

### **Mentee Movsar Asuev, Mentor Ingrid Veninger**

*"I am incredibly excited to participate in this annual mentorship program by LIFT. It's the beginning of my journey in the Canadian filmmaking world and opportunity to grow as a filmmaker and a person. I hope to expand my professional skills and learn new ways of storytelling under the mentorship of Ingrid Veninger."*

—Movsar Asuev

*"Oftentimes, our creative practice can be isolating, now more than ever, in context of COVID-19. We need each other. I am interested and excited to be a mentor because I want to engage with passionate voices, share ideas, and champion the stories people feel they have to tell."*

—Ingrid Veninger

**Movsar Asuev** was once born and raised in the Chechen republic, a federal subject of the Russian Federation. At age of 17, he was expelled from university by authorities of the republic. Since then he picked up the camera and had started a long journey of exploring filmmaking and life in general. In 2013, he started working in a local film company called "Chechenfilm," where he served as a second camera operator for two years. Next step on his journey was joining media production team of MMA organizations "ABC Championship," where he directed, shot and edited many promos and short-stories about MMA fighters. In the end of 2016, Movsar moved to Saint-Petersburg, from where a few months later he migrated to Canada with great assistance of Canadian government.

**Ingrid Veninger** holds an MFA from York University and has been a full-time faculty member of AMPD (School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design) since 2019. Born in Bratislava and raised in Canada, Ingrid has been celebrated as "the DIY queen of Canadian filmmaking" (Liam Lacey, The Globe and Mail). Since 2008, she has produced ten feature films with premieres at TIFF, Rotterdam, Locarno, Slamdance, Whistler, Rome, Hot Docs, Karlovy Vary and MoMA in New York. With retrospectives of her work in Ottawa at the Canadian Film Institute and in Santiago, Chile at FEMCine, Ingrid received the WIFTS International Visionary Award, the Alliance of Women Film Journalists EDA Award for "Best Director" and the Jay Scott Prize awarded by the Toronto Film Critics Association. A member of the Directors Guild of Canada and participant in the inaugural TIFF Studio, Berlinale Talents, and Rotterdam Producer's Lab, Ingrid has been a mentor at the Canadian Film Centre and Screenwriter-in-Residence at

the University of Toronto. An advocate for gender parity, Ingrid initiated the pUNK Films Femmes Lab in 2014 to foster six narrative feature films written and directed by Canadian women, sponsored by Academy Award winner Melissa Leo. On April 1, 2020, she launched a collaborative "Exquisite Cadaver" project, wherein 10 female filmmakers from around the world (China, Germany, Spain, South Africa, Bolivia and Canada) co-create a 100-minute film while in quarantine. <https://www.punkfilms.ca>

### **Mentee Jo Güstin, Mentor Coral Aiken**

*"Yes, go to Canada. That country LOVES artists! They invest in them, there are so many grants, they actually think it's a real job! I was told. And here I am, proving them right! I feel so grateful and lucky to have been chosen for this mentorship program! I am not only new in the country, I am also new in the industry and as much as I am passionate about it, having written unproduced screenplays for years, it can be a little intimidating. My career goals when I moved here was to become the Kenya Barris of AfroQueer fiction and to have my own animated series like Rebecca Sugar. I landed at the Pearson Airport with my unbreakable ambitions and my broken English and I wondered: «Now what?» Now the Newcomer Filmmmentor Program at LIFT! Just as I was preparing the ground for my own creative production company, I am lucky enough to have been attributed a mentor, a person who has been in my shoes before: Coral Aiken! Dear Coral, I know NOTHING about production! Yet."*

—Jo Güstin

*"LIFT is an invaluable resource to the city of Toronto. I have been involved in the organization as a filmmaker member for over a decade and have seen the incredible impact on our community. I am proud and honoured to be a mentor to this year's Filmmmentor program. I look forward to engaging with the talented mentees and I know I will be learning just as much from them as they will from me."*

—Coral Aiken

**Jo Güstin** (she/her/tbd) is an intersectionality comedian and writer for several art forms. She uses fiction and comedy to dismantle the cis het white patriarchy. In 2016, her experimental short film "Aux Mots de couleur" was acclaimed at Cineffable, the International Lesbian and Feminist Film Festival in Paris. After the tragicomic "9 Histoires lumineuses," a collection of short stories published in 2017 by *Présence Africaine*, in 2019 Jo Güstin denounced, in the stinging novel "Ah Sissi," the way France treats racialized womxn. Since 2018, she has been performing her standup show "Je n'suis pas venue ici pour souffrir, OK ?" at political festivals. In 2019 the award-winning soul and jazz album "African Time" by Gwen & Tiana (Ubuntu Music) was released, a feel-good gem with Jo Güstin as lyricist. Jo Güstin studied in Cameroon, France, Japan and Germany and holds a M.Sc. in management from HEC Paris. After arriving in Canada on July 1, 2019 as a permanent resident, the Toronto-based activist realizes that as a queer Black genderfluid womxn, she belongs nowhere. She wants all the queer BIPOC around the world feeling the same to find in her productions a place to call home. That is why in 2020, she will launch dearnge society, a platform showcasing and producing AfroQueer creators who have something to say.

**Coral Aiken** is a creative producer based in Toronto. Coral founded Aiken Heart Films to develop fresh and original work for an engaged audience. Aiken has screened work internationally with films in competition at Cannes Cinéfondation, Rotterdam, BAFICI, Sarajevo and TIFF. She produced one of the top viewed films on Nowness.com. Expanding into international co-production, Coral produced a short film in Istanbul, Turkey, which was selected for the Locarno Talent Academy. Her latest feature film "Carmen," by Valerie Buhagiar, is slated for a 2021 release. <https://aikenheartfilms.com>

### **Mentee Darya Ruseva, Mentor Faraz Anoushahpour**

*"I am very thankful to the LIFT Community for being selected in the Newcomer Mentorship program! For me, this is a great opportunity to learn more about experimental cinema by working with Faraz Anoushahpour and a challenge for me to further my study and develop my skills. This is an amazing way to get a unique experience by working and communicating with a mentor who has similar interests to me and can help to find my own language in cinema. I hope this mentorship program will help me bring my film ideas to life and that I can meet great people that will open doors for further collaboration in films."*

—Darya Ruseva

*"I am very thrilled to be welcomed back to this important initiative by LIFT. I share a deep understanding of the reality and challenges newcomer artists face arriving in a new country and I am committed to sharing the knowledge and experience that I have gained in the past few years working as a filmmaker and film programmer in Toronto."*

—Faraz Anoushahpour

**Darya Ruseva:** Before filmmaking, I spent most of my time painting and had plans to become an architect. But in a single moment, everything changed and I realized that the next logical step in my personal, practical and intellectual growth would be a turn toward cinema. I applied to the Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK) and was accepted to the Normund Lacis' master department, which specializes in animation and multimedia films. However, due to the political situation in my home country and its impact on Russian cinema I immigrated to Canada, to be able to make films, which are more interesting to me than the government. Here in Canada, where I got freedom in choice in my film ideas, I realized, how many things are possible to create without being in the ideological frames. As a result, I started interested in experimental cinema and currently continue to explore this area of the film language.

**Faraz Anoushahpour** is an artist and film programmer. He holds a degree in architecture from the Architectural Association in London, UK, and an MFA in Interdisciplinary Art from OCAD University in Toronto, Canada. He acted as film programmer for Images Festival from 2015–2018, and was a participant in the Belligerent Eyes residency at the Prada Foundation (Venice, Italy). His collaborative film and installation work has been shown at Projections (New York Film Festival), Wavelengths (Toronto International Film Festival), International Film Festival Rotterdam, Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen (Germany), Media City Festival (Windsor/Detroit), Experimenta (Bangalore), Crossroads



Festival (San Francisco), and ZK/U Centre for Art and Urbanistics (Berlin), Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography (Toronto), SPACES Art Centre (Cleveland), and Trinity Square Video (Toronto). <https://www.farazanoushahpour.com> and <https://p-f-r.com>

Any questions about this program can be directed to **Interim Education Administrator Fraser Wright** at [specialprojects@lift.on.ca](mailto:specialprojects@lift.on.ca)

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### **About the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT)**

LIFT is an artist-run charitable organization dedicated to facilitating excellence in the moving image through media arts education and production resources. LIFT exists to provide support and encouragement for independent filmmakers and artists through affordable access to production, post-production and exhibition equipment; professional and creative development; workshops and courses; commissioning and exhibitions; artist-residencies; and a variety of other services. Founded in 1981 by a small collective, LIFT has since grown to become one of the foremost centres of its kind globally.  
<http://www.lift.ca>

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