



**FILM
MAKERS
LEGAL
CLINIC**

CENTER FOR VISUAL ADVOCACY

2024

ANNUAL REPORT

Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

Table of Contents

Letter from the Director	2
About Us	3
The Center for Visual Advocacy	4
The Role of Visual Advocacy	4
Strategy for Impact	4
The Filmmakers Legal Clinic	5
Filmmakers Legal Clinic By The Numbers	6
Highlights: 2023-24 Clinic Events	7
Highlights: 2023-24 Film Projects	8
Film Profile: Call Me Dancer	10
Highlights: 2023-24 Client Achievements	11
Leadership	12

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

What an incredible year it's been in the Filmmakers Legal Clinic! Our team held trainings for hundreds of filmmakers over the year, educating the field at film festivals, convenings and in their organizations about copyright issues, distribution, how to read and navigate a contract, negotiations, music licensing – the list goes on and on.

In a time of great uncertainty, our filmmakers raised questions of democracy, equity, climate, history, and justice. These incredible projects went on to film festivals and theatrical and streaming releases and drew attention to these issues.

The FLC was busier than ever as students worked to support our filmmakers and video journalists in this storytelling. The Filmmakers Legal Clinic (FLC) at Cardozo is a unique law school clinic providing pro bono transactional, intellectual property and First Amendment legal services to independent filmmakers. A vital resource for New York filmmakers, the clinic is invaluable to creatives and journalists who need high-level legal expertise while working with limited resources.

The Clinic's focus on providing intensive student training in cutting-edge legal advocacy continues, and our students are entering the profession with a breadth and a depth of legal training of which we are deeply proud. Our students worked with more than 56 films (!!!) and hosted dozens of educational programs, trainings and pop-up legal clinics.

The FLC website is popular and important resource for the creative community and the lawyers who serve them, providing legal empowerment to a broad group of independent filmmakers, journalists and artists and serve as a resource for social justice advocates. We grew the work of the Center for Visual Advocacy, which advances visual advocacy by amplifying under-told stories and by educating and empowering the filmmakers who bring them to the public, to house the FLC and all of the adjacent work that we do.

In an increasingly complex world, we believe in the power of visual advocacy to unite. We continue to provide meaningful resources for creatives doing this important work, and work to lower the legal hurdles set of practice-ready skills that prepares them for an increasingly complex world where questions of artificial intelligence, intellectual property, ownership and use are at the forefront of some of the most thorny legal questions.

We could not be more proud of our work in getting important stories told and in training the next generation of legal advocates. We anticipate that our work will be even more important in the coming year and current environment. Your support and commitment to our mission and our work mean the world to us, and we eagerly await all that we can accomplish together in 2025

Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin

Clinical Professor of Law

Director of the Filmmakers Legal Clinic

Director of the Center for Visual Advocacy

Senior Heyman Fellow and Director of the Leadership Program
at the Heyman Center on Corporate Governance

About Us

The Filmmakers Legal Clinic (FLC) provides free transactional, intellectual property and First Amendment legal services to visual advocates, filmmakers and video journalists working to highlight social justice issues and expand the stories that are told through film.

We empower independent filmmakers to navigate contractual, legal, and business issues, allowing their diverse voices and points of view to reach audiences. We achieve our mission by providing filmmakers with individualized transactional legal representation and providing community partners with educational services such as pop-up legal clinics and “know your rights” trainings.

FLC fills a significant gap for social justice advocates. Technological innovation over the past years has dramatically democratized access to traditional filmmaking tools, making quality cameras and intuitive video editing tools broadly available. This remarkable phenomenon has spurred an explosion in content creation at many levels, including unprecedented interest in social justice documentaries and films by and about people whose voices have not traditionally been represented on screen. One of the last barriers-to-entry of filmmaking for this group is the prohibitive cost of the legal services that are an effective precondition to protecting their works, securing insurance, and distributing their films. In filling this void, the FLC provides these filmmakers with a path to reach their audiences.

FLC is supported by the **Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund**, whose assistance has led to the exponential growth of the clinic, and the **Legal Clinic Fund**, a collaborative fund to support the growth and sustainability of legal clinics that seek to advance and defend First Amendment rights, media freedom and transparency in their communities and nationally. The fund is supported by **The Abrams Foundation, Democracy Fund, Heising-Simons Foundation** and **The Klarman Family Foundation**. **The Miami Foundation** serves as fiscal sponsor for the fund. FLC is also supported by the **Miranda Family Fund**, the focus of which includes creating opportunities for artists of color, promoting diverse representation in all levels of government, increasing and protecting reproductive rights and building resilient systems in Puerto Rico. The clinic also appreciates the support of our alumni and many individual donors.

The Center for Visual Advocacy

Sitting at the intersection of law, film and social justice, the mission of The Center for Visual Advocacy (CVA) is to advance visual advocacy and amplify under-told stories by educating and empowering the filmmakers, video journalists and documentarians who tell them. With visual media nearly ubiquitous and calls for social and environmental justice reverberating loudly, this area is of vital importance—and growing. Lawyers and the law can—and must —advance equality and social justice using tools beyond impact litigation. Visual media has a proven track record of changing hearts and minds, effectively shifting public perception and triggering policy changes. Lawyers are necessary to ensure that storytellers are protected from legal liability and to help them maintain critical ownership of their IP and understand their First Amendment rights. The CVA aims to be at the center of this developing field.

The Role of Visual Advocacy

The power of visual media, including photography and film, to portray issues and show stories in a way that creates a shared language between storyteller and audience is significant. When done well, visual advocacy sparks empathy, understanding and, crucially, public engagement. Things we see change our perception of the world and how we interact with those around us.

Though litigation and legislative action are the technical tools for policy changes, shifts in public opinion are necessary to implement transformative, lasting reforms. Visual advocacy aims to perform this essential function: It targets the environment in which a court case may be decided or legislation may be enacted. A more receptive public is not just more likely to understand the issues at play but also more likely to embrace change.

Strategy for Impact

At the CVA, we believe in the power of visual media to effect social change. To further our core mission, we provide free legal services through the FLC, work with our community partners to provide trainings and resources to empower creators and partner with our clients, festivals and partner organizations to promote works that highlight struggles of underrepresented communities. Our client representation supports filmmakers to ensure they are sufficiently protected to tell their stories. We then aim to help distribute these works to a broad audience by working with community organizations, educational institutions, film festivals and other partners.

OUR CLIENTS OUR ISSUES

The clinic supports **social impact films** that fall into two categories:

Projects centering **diverse and underrepresented communities** including narratives by or about:

- People who identify as Black, Indigenous and/or People of Color,
- Religious & ethnic minorities including Jewish voices
- Disparities in healthcare (including voices of people with cognitive or physical disabilities)
- Mental Health, including addiction
- Immigration, including refugees and asylum seekers
- Sexuality and gender
- Poverty, including food and housing insecurity

Projects centering **civic engagement or attacks on democratic ideals** including:

- Education
- Environment and climate
- Systems of oppression, including police brutality, mass incarceration, gun violence, war
- Limitations on liberties including freedom of expression, voting rights and reproductive rights
- Media and technology, including disinformation and political extremism

The Filmmakers Legal Clinic

Drawing on core strengths of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, including its pioneering experiential learning model, its top-ranked Intellectual Property and Information Law Program, and its longstanding commitment to public service, the FLC was established to aid independent filmmakers and video journalists at a time when few such resources existed. Under the leadership of Professor Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin, the Clinic broadened its focus to intentionally elevate social justice projects, with a goal of diversifying the stories being told through film. This makes the clinic's home at The Center for Visual Advocacy a perfect fit.

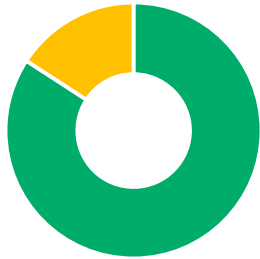
The clinic has represented hundreds of films since its inception, many of which have gone on to appear theatrical releases, streaming services, and to appear in the most prestigious international film festivals, including Cannes, Sundance, SXSW, the Tribeca Festival, the LA Film Festival, Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, the Human Rights Film Festival, DOC NYC and many others.

Students in the Filmmakers Legal Clinic and Advanced Clinic learn essential skills to be excellent deal makers and wise counselors who can see how disparate elements fit into the larger transaction. The clinic shapes students into lawyers who are capable of bringing people together and finding solutions that benefit all parties. The work of the clinic is interdisciplinary – we bring together several distinct practice areas – intellectual property, First Amendment law, corporate law, contract drafting, negotiation, leadership and employment law – to create a model that trains future lawyers in the cross-disciplinary world of real-life sophisticated practice.

"The Filmmakers Legal Clinic's legal interns play an instrumental role in the release of films that expose some of today's most important cultural touch points."

FILMMAKERS LEGAL CLINIC BY THE NUMBERS

OUR INTERNS



■ Applicants ■ FLC Interns

19

The number of Cardozo students who interned with the clinic in 2024

56

The number of social impact films directly supported by FLC in 2024

OUR CLIENTS



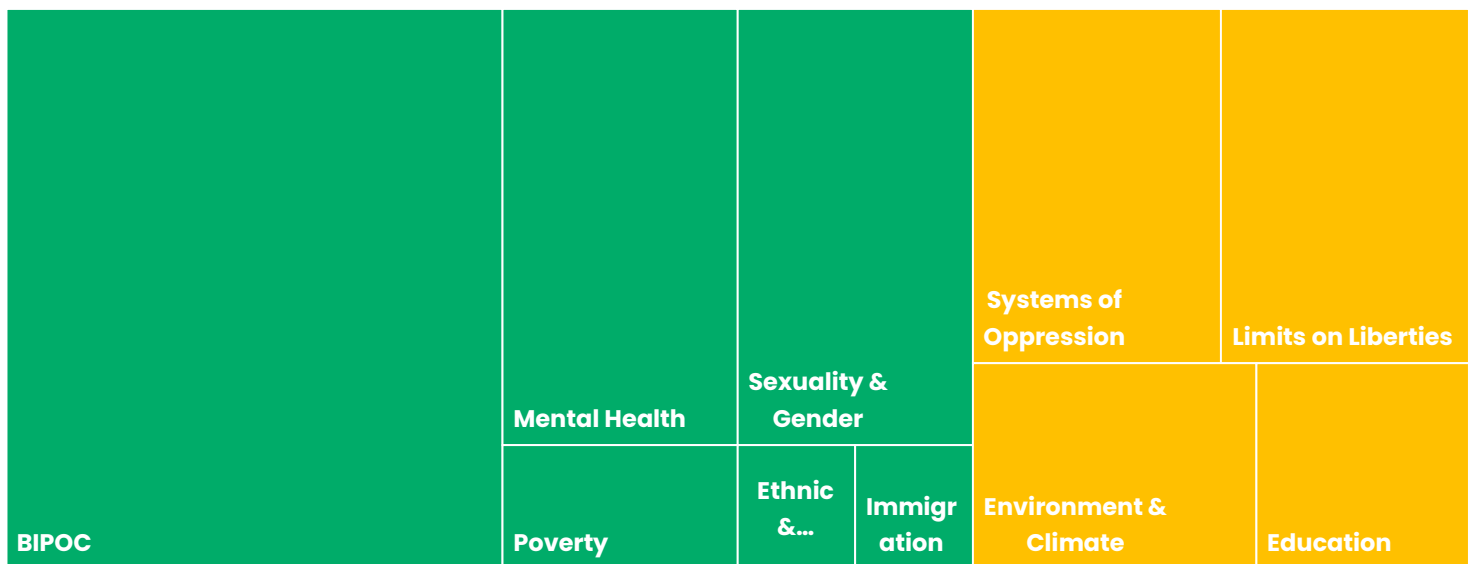
■ Applicants ■ Clients

22%

The percentage of applicants who became FLC clients in 2024

OUR ADVOCACY

■ Films Centering Underrepresented & Diverse Communities ■ Films About Civic Engagement/Democratic Ideals



This graph visually represents the social impact issues advanced by the clinic's film clients in 2024

Highlights: 2023-24 Clinic Events

Pop-Up Legal Clinics

The FLC ran a number of pop-up legal clinics with the Sundance Institute and the NYU Production Lab, allowing clinic students to provide tailored legal advice quickly to more than 20 filmmakers.

New York State Multicultural Creativity Summit

The FLC was delighted to present at the sixth annual New York State Multicultural Creativity Summit, hosted by the Motion Picture Association in partnership with Empire State Development and the New York Film Festival. Filmmakers received an overview of the resources available through the clinic as well as a broad sense of the major legal issues facing filmmakers.

FLC x Sundance: Legal Empowerment Series

The Filmmakers Legal Clinic once again served as official partner of the Sundance Film Festival. The clinic provides training for Sundance Institute artists, including a mix of fiction and nonfiction filmmakers.

FLC x NYU Production Lab: Lunch and Learn

FLC and NYU Production Lab have continued a productive partnership. FLC provided monthly legal trainings to members of NYU Production Lab including on topics such as business formation and copyright.

Community Screenings

Together with Cardozo's Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice and Criminal Defense Clinic, FLC hosted a screening of first-time director Trey Petgrave's film, *Fear of Motion*. The screening led to a robust conversation about the probation system by community members in the audience, moderated by Kings County Civil Court Judge, Marva Brown '06.



Judge Marva Brown '06 introduces filmmaker Trev Petgrave

Highlights: 2023–24 Film Projects

FLC served over 40 clients in the 2024 calendar year, bringing the total number of filmmakers represented to over 275. Of the projects taken on, over 50% centered the story of BIPOC communities, nearly 20% centered the voices of women and/or LGBTQ people and 20% centered mental health. Our student interns averaged approximately 70 hours in the service of each of our filmmaker clients each semester, providing strategic counsel and essential legal resources such as assistance drafting and reviewing subject and location releases, guidance on copyright law including fair use and music licensing, and assistance with entity formation. A selection of representative projects includes the following:

The Battle for Kyiv

This film documents the battle for the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv and how a city that was expected to fall to the Russian army in a matter of days, was held and eventually liberated due to the bravery of its regions' ordinary citizens. Documenting the entirety of the battle, from the days leading up to the invasion until the final liberation of the entire region, this is a David and Goliath story told through the eyes of British-Lebanese conflict journalist Oz Katerji as he joins a team of young local parliamentary workers who have taken up arms to bring aid to the frontlines. It turns the camera onto the brave communities on the outskirts of Kyiv, who sacrificed everything to stop this symbol of Ukrainian statehood from falling.

For Venida, For Kalief

For Venida, For Kalief debuts the poetry of Venida Brodnax Browder, mother of Kalief Browder, a young man who was wrongfully imprisoned at Rikers Island without trial, kept in solitary confinement, and ultimately died by suicide at age 22 because of the trauma he endured. Set against the backdrop of community resistance to mass incarceration, the film lyrically weaves the deep impact of Kalief's legacy with a cinematic mosaic of the movement to transform critical New York policies and convert the world's most notorious jail into a renewable energy center.

Marriage Cops

Marriage Cops is a documentary set in the small town of Dehradun in North India. The film tells the stories of the female local police officers who work at the Women's Helpline and provide relationship advice to unhappy couples.

Million Dollar Block

A complex portrait of a neighborhood and its inhabitants, *Million Dollar Block* gives us a window into one public housing development on the precipice of change. The film's point of departure is a 1980s training video for New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) where employees promise decent and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. Tensions rise as a new building is erected within the development, the NYPD Housing Police's surveillance turns lethal, and NYCHA continues to ignore the conditions of its residents. *Million Dollar Block* questions what the future of public housing looks like from the vantage point of those most affected by registering the anxieties, convictions, and survival strategies that preoccupy ordinary lives.

Oaklead

Oaklead explores the history of lead poisoning in Oakland, focusing on environmental racism and both historical and ongoing community health efforts. The film delves into the impact of deindustrialization, "legacy lead," contaminated water, exposure methods, stories of affected families, and the ongoing fight to eradicate contamination.

Queens Ballroom

Queens Ballroom tells the story of a ballroom that resembles old Shanghai or Taipei's glamorous night clubs and the Chinese American dancers that go there in shiny skirts or vintage vests, to dance. Most of the dancers are first-generation immigrants in their 60s or 70s and the ballroom allows them to relive their youth in their home country.

Sunflower Girl

Sunflower Girl is a narrative short that follows Rosie, a 13-year-old Chinese-American girl, as she embarks on a skateboarding escapade through the streets of New York with her crush and his best friend - at the cost of abandoning her little sister and delivering a forgotten lunchbox.

Watch You Rise

A coming-of-age documentary follows a filmmaker's journey to expose the roots of sexual harm. In interviews with survivors, perpetrators, & experts- the cultural, educational, & legal gray areas that fuel the cycle of harm are revealed. The film empowers young people to engage in meaningful change.

Art from *Oaklead*



Film Profile: Call Me Dancer

Making it in the elite and highly selective world of dance is challenging for anyone—for a street dancer from Mumbai, it is next to impossible. However, 21-year-old Manish is determined to not only make it as a dancer, but to also continue to help support his family by doing so. When he accidentally walks into an inner-city dance studio and meets Yehuda, a curmudgeonly 70-year-old Israeli dance master, Manish realizes that there may be a path to a future in dance, and the unlikely duo embark on a journey that will change the lives of both student and teacher in this vibrant, dynamic, true-life adventure. *Call Me Dancer* has won 22 awards and been seen in 20 countries, and that list is growing daily. The film is set to air on PBS next year.

Students from the Filmmakers Legal Clinic worked closely with Leslie Shampaine, the Director/Producer of *Call Me Dancer* and provided counseling with respect to entity formation, crew and life rights agreements and releases.

"My experience working with the students from the Filmmakers Legal Clinic on *Call Me Dancer*, my first independent feature documentary, was invaluable. They provided tailored advice and guidance on legal agreements specific to my film's needs. The students were highly professional, and I felt confident knowing that the lead professors were always there to offer oversight and support."

—Leslie Shampaine, Director/Producer *Call Me Dancer*

A film still from *Call Me Dancer*



Highlights: 2023-24 Client Achievements

The Art of Unwar by Maria Niro was screened at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC as part of its film series Art Films and Special Screenings, as well as Anthology Film Archives in NY.

Call Me Dancer has amassed 22 festival awards since premiering at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival in 2023 and receiving a nomination for Best Documentary. Recent awards include Best of the Fest Audience Vote at the 2024 Palm Springs International Film Festival, 2024 New Hampshire Jewish Film Festival, Audience Award at the 2024 Annapolis International Film Festival and Sonoma International Film Festival, Next Wave Jury Prize at the 2024 Miami Jewish Film Festival and Best Documentary, Magnolia Award at the 2024 Shanghai TV Festival. The film is currently being shown in cinemas in Japan, has been seen in over 20 countries and is set to air in the United States on PBS in 2025.

Calico Rebellion had its world premiere at the 2024 Dances With Film: NY Film Festival.

Edel Rodriguez. Freedom is a Verb premiered at DOC NYC Film Festival, won Best Documentary at the Tampa Bay Latin International Film Festival, and was an official selection of the New Hampshire Film Festival, St Louis International Film Festivals.

After AppleTV+ acquired distributions rights to ***Fancy Dance*** in February 2024, the film began a limited theatrical release in the United States and is now available to stream on AppleTV+. The film has garnered 96% favorable reviews from critics, according to rottentomatoes.com, and earned numerous accolades. Most recently, the Austin Film Critics Association recognized Lily Gladstone's performance in selecting her for their 2024 Breakthrough Artist Award, and screenwriters Miciana Alise and Erica Tremblay were nominated Best Woman Screenwriter by the Alliance of Women Film Journalists at the 2024 EDA Female Focus Awards.

Pay or Die was recognized for its excellence in social impact filmmaking and received the Systemic Change Award at the 2024 Social Impact Media Awards. The film also won the Cinema For Peace Dove on Global Health, and director Rachael Dyer was nominated best Film Director at the Women's Image Network Awards.

The Irritable Heart is now streaming on Amazon Prime and Apple TV.

Sunflower Girl continued a substantial festival run and was nominated for several awards including at the Tacoma Film Festival (Best Short Film), Woodstock Film Festival (Mark Braunstein Award for Best Narrative), Sunrise Film Festival (Best International Short).

Throuple was an official selection at over a dozen film festivals in 2024 including the NewFest and Frameline film festivals.

Leadership



Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin
*Clinical Professor of Law and
 Director of the Filmmakers
 Legal Clinic Director, Center
 for Visual Advocacy Senior
 Heyman Fellow and Director
 of the Leadership Program at
 the Heyman Center on
 Corporate Governance*

Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin teaches and directs the Filmmakers Legal Clinic, which provides pro bono legal services and training on legal issues to filmmakers and video journalists around the world. She is also the Director of the Center for Visual Advocacy, which serves as a hub for activists, artists, academics and professionals seeking to harness the power of visual advocacy to move the social justice needle.

She is also the Founding Director of the Leadership Program at the Heyman Center on Corporate Governance. Previously, she was Dean of Students and Lecturer-in-Law at Columbia Law School. She teaches in the areas of intellectual property, transactional law, corporations, negotiation and leadership. As a leading film lawyer, she has lectured at film festivals around the world on issues related to copyright, production, distribution and licensing.



Liza Schaeffer
*Clinical Fellow of the
 Filmmakers Legal Clinic*

Liza Schaeffer is the Clinical Fellow of the Filmmakers Legal Clinic. She was formerly Senior Counsel at a fintech startup (now a part of Bloomberg) where she oversaw all commercial contracting, information security and internal compliance matters. Before going in-house, Liza was a member of the Salans/Dentons intellectual property team and advised clients in the luxury, fashion, beauty and start-up sectors. A native of Switzerland, Liza was also an active member of Dentons' French desk, a special cross-border practice group composed of bilingual, French-speaking lawyers. She studied politics and French at the University of Virginia before earning her law degree from Cardozo. Her areas of expertise include copyright, trademark, licensing and distribution deals, complex commercial transactions, privacy and cybersecurity.