



Moving Like Pond Water

A feature documentary by Cheryl Bookout
Currently in post-production

What does it mean to serve a country that has not always made room for who you are?

This feature length documentary explores what it means for LGBTQIA+ veterans to serve a country whose promises of freedom, equality, and belonging have not always extended to them.

Through poetry, music, theater, movement, and visual art, they reclaim authorship of stories too often defined by trauma, policy, or stereotype.

Photo: Behind the scenes, Air Force Veteran Omar Columbus



Director's Note

My parents met while serving in World War II. They returned home to a silence around the wounds of war, long before PTSD had a name. Growing up inside that quiet taught me that art often speaks where language fails.

I began working on *Moving Like Pond Water* in 2023 with a broader question about veterans, creativity, and the return from military service. As relationships deepened and the film took shape, its true center became clear: LGBTQIA+ veterans whose creative practices give form to experiences of service, identity, belonging, and return.

This discovery has not changed the film's values; it has revealed its deeper story. I feel a profound responsibility to honor the trust these veterans have placed in me.

Photo: Cheryl Bookout by Carly Valentine

The universe is made of stories, not atoms.

—Muriel Rukeyser, poet

The Big Why & Cultural Relevance

This is not simply a film about veterans who happen to be LGBTQIA+. It is a film about how LGBTQIA+ veterans negotiate service, identity, belonging, memory, and creative freedom, and how art allows them to author their own lives beyond the categories imposed upon them.

The film asks what becomes possible when veterans reclaim voice and authorship and are seen not through crisis or stereotype, but as artists, thinkers, and culture-makers.

At a time of deep division and isolation, the film offers a different model of listening, creativity, and human connection.

Photo: Behind the scenes, Wall of Faces Museum, Douglas AZ



The Film Unfolds as an Interwoven Journey

Omar Columbus's *White Marker*, a 22-stanza poem, provides the film's emotional spine. As his words move through experiences of service, identity, memory, and return, they open pathways into the lives of other LGBTQIA+ veterans. A song, gesture, photograph, performance, or act of making carries the film from one story to another. Rather than presenting a series of individual profiles, *Moving Like Pond Water* accumulates meaning through connection, revealing how each participant finds a different language for what cannot easily be spoken.

White Marker (First Stanza)

*War makes humans human.
Conflict is universal.
From the beginning, There was war.
Before I was born,
And lifetimes afar.
Battles rage
As mankind ages.
Yet never learns
From past mistakes,
Or from stories of those
Who live to tell
Of what war remains
A living hell.*

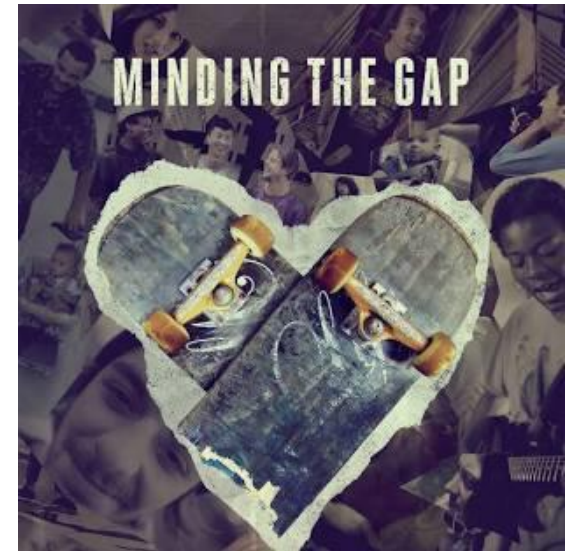
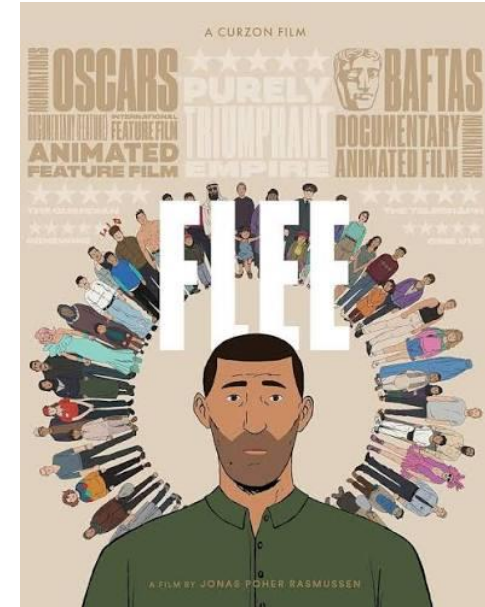


Photo: Air Force Veteran Omar Columbus

Visual & Stylistic Approach

The film does not reduce its participants to either military or LGBTQIA+ identities; their creative work becomes the language through which they author their own stories.

Drawing on the patient intimacy of *Minding the Gap*, the participant-created performance of *Procession*, and *Flee*'s fluid movement between testimony, animation and memory, *Moving Like Pond Water* weaves observation, original art, archival material, and imagination.



A Few Key Film Participants



Omar Columbus: An Air Force veteran, poet, and photographer whose 22-stanza spoken-word poem becomes the film's emotional spine, carrying the audience through questions of service, identity, isolation, and belonging.



Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer: A decorated Army veteran discharged for being a lesbian, she reflects on service and identity and performs an original song from the creative practice she began at age 75.

More Film Participants



Colonel Chip Atterbury: A retired Air Force officer (L) who speaks about combat, leadership and serving while gay. Pictured here with his husband, Mark (R).



Delissa Dawn: A transgender Navy veteran, author, and equine practitioner who examines the personal cost of serving within a military culture that denied essential parts of her identity.

Production Status & Next Creative Phase

Principal photography is substantially complete, and the feature is in post-production. The next phase will restructure the existing edit around the film's LGBTQIA+ veterans ensemble, with Omar Columbus's 22-stanza poem providing the emotional spine. Archival material, original animation, still photography, music, and performance will deepen the connections among their stories.



Photo: *Tapestry*, a one-act play about a soldier's journey home, written and performed by veterans (2024).

Impact & Audience Strategy

- International Film Festival Circuit
- LGBTQIA+ veteran service and advocacy organizations
- Veterans' arts and cultural organizations
- University veterans' centers and LGBTQIA+ resource centers
- Museums, libraries, and community arts spaces

The film will support screenings and conversations among LGBTQIA+ veterans, military families, veterans' organizations, universities, museums, and community arts spaces, using creative expression as an entry point into experiences often discussed only through trauma or policy.

The Next Cut: A \$25,000 Editorial Milestone

We are seeking \$25,000 to complete a substantially restructured feature-length cut centered on LGBTQIA+ veterans. This editorial milestone will integrate Omar Columbus’s poem, performance material, archival footage, still photography, and preliminary animation, creating the cut needed for feedback screenings, executive-producer outreach, completion funding, and final post-production.

Editorial milestone	Amount
Lead editor	\$16,000
Editorial preparation and archival integration	\$4,000
Preliminary animation, graphics, and sound	\$3,500
Feedback screening and accessibility	\$1,500
Immediate ask	\$25,000

Total project budget: \$254,280
Secured to date: \$62,198
Immediate editorial milestone: \$25,000

Key Creative Team

A women-led team of award-winning filmmakers committed to art and social change.



Director Cheryl Bookout is a filmmaker based in Southern California. Her directing and producing credits include *Moving Like Pond Water*, *Inside the Beauty Bubble*, *Acting Like Women*, *PURE*, *Gloria's Call*, and *Just a Friend*. She is co-founder of the nonprofit The Chimaera Project.



Director of Photography John Darwin Kurc is a cinematographer and photojournalist whose work bridges art and activism. His visual storytelling has been featured in documentary and editorial contexts, including *American Scar*, produced by The New Yorker. He continues his photojournalist work with a focus on immigration issues.



Editor Kat Knight has worked in film for over 12 years, collaborating with more than 20 companies. They have experience in diverse fields including independent documentary, premium network series, and social impact videos for nonprofit organizations.

Key Creative Team



Impact Producer Foster V. Corder, Navy Veteran, co-founded Black Bird Films, producing advertising for major brands. As Capitol Records' Director of Music Video Production, he guided videos for M.C. Hammer, Bebe and Cece Winans, and Young MC. More recently, he directed the feature *The Daughters of Dolemite*. He has worked in production and cinematography roles on 55 shorts and 23 features.



Producer Stacy Sweeting's work includes the short documentary *Inside the Beauty Bubble* and the anthology series Discover Indie Film. Her background spans development, fundraising and supporting projects from concept through exhibition.



Producer Magi Raible, Air Force veteran, brings extensive experience as President and Creative Director of LifeGear Design, Inc. She has built a successful business through creative leadership and strategic planning. Her ability to move ideas from concept to completion will strengthen the team through post-production, fundraising, and audience engagement.

They served within institutions that did not always make room for who they were. Through art, they create that room for themselves and invite us to enter.

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Partners and Supporters:

Mil-Tree Veterans Project, Creative Corps Inland
SoCal, California Arts Council, Arts Connection
San Bernardino County, and the Sunder Foundation.

