

#### MOVING DREAMS STUDIOS in association with 13TH GEN TRANSGRESS STUDIOS

ATMATMAN

presents

#### written by

CODY L. MAKIL DAVIA SPAIN D'LO LIDA N. VALA NEELU BHUMAN RYKA AOKI STEFANO GONZALEZ

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film by NEELU BHUMAN

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7 TRANS\* WRITERS / 7 TELLING STORIES A COLLECTIVE EMBRACE OF THE MAGICAL & REAL

TRANSFINITE is a sci-fi omnibus feature film composed of seven standalone short stories where supernatural trans and queer people from various cultures use their powers to protect, love, teach, fight and thrive.



#### **SYNOPSIS**

Most of us have been in situations where we feel completely powerless and deeply frustrated with the unfairness of it all, sometimes we have lost control of life and sometimes we find a way to use our rage, resentment and frustrations to grow a beautiful garden. In Transfinite, the protagonists, like smooth warriors, choose to find that inner power and use it to transform undesirable situations into desirable ones in a snap. Transfinite is a somewhat dark and funny, visually and musically expressive sci-fi feature length film made up of seven standalone stories that are connected by the common thread of power - power to protect, power to love, power to teach, fight and thrive. All the seven stories, NAJMA, ASURA, SHAYLA, BAHARI, NOVA, MAYA, VIVA, written by seven trans\* writers with varied backgrounds reflect this singular vision and the cohesive sensibility is designed by the filmmaker using exquisite poetry, subtle VFX, sublime animation and enveloping music.

Envisioned by Lida N. Vala ritten by Davia Spain & Neelu Bhuman

## "I bet he's with his friend Isiah, getting drunk and pickin' up cis women!" NAJMA

Najma and Darnell, both hotly attractive emerging hip hop artists based in Oakland, newly in love, have set a date to work on a track together. Najma waits for Darnell in her West Oakland loft while Darnell is processing his difficult feelings and reveals to his therapist that his deepest fear is facing humiliation and shame from his friends, particularly Isiah, for dating a transwoman. Najma continues to wait in her loft, now feeling more alone as though in a barren desert, swerving between sweet memories of a prior treehouse romance with Darnell and intense self-doubt that she will never be good enough for true love as a transfemme. Meanwhile, Darnell decides to first meet his friend Isiah to tell him about being in love Najma. Najma falls asleep, tired of waiting and consumed with self-doubt. In her sleep, where she has the power to command her dreams to become reality, she turns into a rattlesnake princess to protect Darnell from his trans and homophobic friend Isiah by squeezing Isiah until he repents and admits that he did his bestie Darnell wrong. Najma wakes up to a knocking on the door from Darnel

# ASURA

#### Written By Ryka Aoki

In a modest Japanese American home in the Sunset district of San Francisco, a well balanced Tranny Roadshow T-shirt wearing Grandmother calmly cuts vegetables as her fierce and angry Granddaughter punches the bag relentlessly. Stuck unable to open a chilli jar, Grandmother walks with tea to her backyard to ask for her Granddaughter's help. Granddaughter opens the lid effortlessly and goes straight back to punching. Curious, Grandmother asks "What did the bag do to you?" to which the Granddaughter responds "The harder I hit, the stronger I am." Grandmother challenges the Granddaughter to a fight and flips her to ground effortlessly, asking her now flat on the ground Granddaughter "What if you face someone you can't hit?" Over a calming tea, Grandmother teaches the Granddaughter to embrace the power of flexibility, to move like the wind, by reciting a story about the rigid Demon Palm.

# "The harder I hit, the stronger I am!"

# SHAN

Written By Cody L. Makil

## "I did it! I quit!" RONALD

Shayla, a performance artist by night and an earth activist by day believes true change comes from connecting with the spirit. As she tirelessly distributes SAVE THE EARTH educational flyers on Oakland streets day after day, a chance encounter brings Ronald, the unhappy heir of a real estate developer into her spirit zone. Despite his father's advice to not waste time in useless relationships and focus on the building work at hand, he sways into Shayla's path very curious about her and her work. Shayla shows the magic of a simple seed and a Yucca flower, Ronald is smitten leading him to quit his job and his father's fortune.

# BAHAR

Written By Stefano Gonzalez & Neelu Bhuman

"Panapo Majaaliwa, tutaishi kwenye dunia isiyo na mipaka, tuwe huru kupendana, bila vizingiti" / I wish us a future in a world with no limiting borders, to freely love each other, with no obstacles

#### BAHARI

Neruda, an Oakland based graphic designer, is obsessed with the flying Swahili poetry art that connects them with their lover, Bahari, who only travels in stealth due to border control issues. Neruda's partner Dave, a hacker whose work is to create a borderless world, while slightly jealous doesn't find the work at all interesting but is always concerned for Bahari's safety as an artist who needs to cross borders illegally to share their art. As Neruda's despair to see Bahari grows, Emmaio brings a message that Neruda has one chance to feel Bahari again and gives the coordinates for a secret meeting place. Fearless Bahari who believes that the ocean always connects all scattered souls meets Neruda for a poetically romantic afternoon. After a bittersweet goodbye with Bahari, Neruda wakes up to a gentle swirling of Swahili poetry, in the arms of Dave. Neruda asks Dave for Bahari to be buried next to them when they die. Neruda reluctant at first agrees to have two burial grounds, one on either side of Neruda, one for Bahari and one for Dave.

# NOVA

Written By Neelu Bhuman

## "Nah, Nova wouldn't have done that! Please talk to your son."

DAYA / NOVA'S PARENT

Nova, the sunshine kid of three queer parents in Berkeley, discovers that her crutch is stolen again while she is basking in the school playground with her BFF Omari. She devises a master plan this time to teach a lesson to the bully little Billy. She dances with her friend Omari a special dance that puts a spell on Billy which makes him hit himself with the very crutch he stole from Nova. Irate Billy's mother, Marion, who hasn't taken the time to understand the full story, hurries to complain about Nova's bratty behaviour to her three parents. When she confronts Daya and Neal, they tell Marion that Nova wouldn't have done anything and offer some soothing oil for Billy's bruises. She then rushes off to Nova's third parent, Lucas, who gets the truth out of Billy with a gentle yet emphatic slap.



## "You love your duty?"

MANGOBLU

Maya is a poem about love/lust at first sight. Delicate Orchid loving techie Mango Blu expands his inner universe instantly by falling for Parrot Pink who puts her duty of sex work above all. In this futuristic world, technology and nature exist in harmony aiding undeniable primal desires. Parrot Pink and Mango Blu in their instant attraction to one another, sensitvely and poetically study and learn each other to attain a more complete understanding.

TANKING STATE

Written By Davia Spain

"SHUT UP! AND LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO TELL YOU!" HONEY

Celestial Honey is making herself up at the swanky San Franciscan Fairmont hotel to unleash her next spell. Her target this time is a sleazy Politician who has the power to make real change happen at the White House. Looking mesmerizingly stunning, she follows the Politician's security guard to meet him alone in his room. Without wasting any of her precious time as the Politician fumbles for her attention, with a clear list of demands she doms him into a purple spell. The Politician without questioning takes her orders. Honey dances in the glorious sunshine as the executive orders are celebrated in front of The White House.

## TRAILER

#### **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

TRANSFINITE is a first of its kind collective social justice feature film that brings together the creative voices and talents of trans\* artists and filmmakers of color. It is the norm for trans narratives to be erased, only to be talked about in the context of trans murder, death or ridicule. This film centers trans\* characters by placing them in positions of power, wisdom, magic and inner light.

Inspiration & Motivation // As an immigrant, a nonbinary person and a Vipassana meditator my curiosity, motivation and driving force has been about connection. At home, in communities and from Trump to Bolsonaro, the world is in an age of division and isolation. Confident that connection comes from loyalty to cause, I had a strong intention to conjure up a magic place where varied trans\* people could connect, feel inspired, feel joy, learn and create together. This magic place is TRANSFINITE. After making super indie, super low-budget gorgeously experimental award winning short films such as FU377, MORE LOVE. LESS PREPACKAGED BULLSHIT with my lovers, family and friends, I wanted to collaborate with a community of trans\* artists of color, both established and emerging, to create an experimental poetic fiction film that reflected the prismatic nature of our experiences. My first clarity of vision came while reading Devdatt Patnaik's Shikhandi Tales, drawing from a few of the characters discussed in this book, I designed springboard inspiration for a collective of seven trans\* screenwriters. As writers fell in place through organic community outreach with D'Lo's help, I gave three guidelines to each writer 1) a specific political theme to explore 2) to instill the trans\* protagonists with power 3) to use VFX and animation as devices to accentuate the magical

Stories & Themes // The seven standalone stories of Transfinite are connected by the common thread of trans\* in power - power to protect, power to love, power to teach, power to fight and power to thrive. Each explores universal themes such as acceptance, finding humility, self-doubt, shame and fighting for justice. Lida Vala's NAJMA is an intense romantic drama that captures its characters' internal journeys of shame and doubt; Ryka Aoki's ASURA is a family drama where the trans Grandmother imparts her wisdom about rigid masculine ego; Cody Makil's SHAYLA is a romcom about protecting the earth through love with an unlikely developer; Stefano Gonzalez's BAHARI is an expressionist experimental that dreams of a borderless world; my short NOVA is about a 7yr old girl, born to three queer parents, protecting herself from a bully at school by dancing; D'Lo's MAYA is a poetic abstract romcom about a techie transman falling in love with a sex worker; Davia Spain's VIVA is a drama where transfemme Honey tricks a White House politician to make their top wishes come true.

**Aesthetics & Collaboration //** Flipping the current industry practice, with my diligent casting director Tina D'Elia, I cast two cis roles with trans actors, S Angelo Acevedo and Skyler Cooper, adding layered nuance to the characters of Darnell and Isiah in NAJMA. I was particular about casting lead roles with trans\* actors regardless of their professional acting experience, to this end Tina helped cast professional actors like Harmony Santana and to coach newcomers such as Jay Gash and Cielo Flores. Ryka Aoki, the screenwriter of ASURA, has never been on screen before but plays the role of Grandma in her story. Stefano Gonzalez, a trans Latinx producer, helped ensure we had sets where trans\* people of color cast and crew felt inspired to bring their best and felt celebrated. Aja, a trans Filipina-American as the director of photography, suggested we shoot the entire collection of films in anamorphic wide-screen to impart the epic feel they desired to see in a trans\* centered film.

Using the philosophy of magical realism, I elevated Transfinite's magical segments using animation and subtle VFX. While the cost dictated the nature and extent of these animations and VFX, I was fortunate to have Oakland based activist painter, Rob Trujillo, who hand painted all the illustrations and LA based QWOC animator Pamela Chavez turned the illustrations into 2D animations. VFX was meticulously developed with a Chennai based boutique company run by Aravindakumar Venugopal. Excited about the sheer amount of trans\* talent on board, I requested each screenwriter to infuse a real life dimension of themselves into their stories adding stylistic textures using poetry, dance, martial arts, language and song. For example, D'Lo contributed one of his early poems, WORLD'S TABLE, which encapsulates the essence of TRANSFINITE and its protagonists' dreams; Davia Spain, a formidable performer, closed her story VIVA and TRANSFINITE with a triumphant dance sequence; Ryka Aoki, as an LA-based martial arts instructor, inserted herself as the Japanese American martial arts Grandma in her story ASURA and Lida Vala contributed not only as a writer but also the hip hop artist Snipah Wolf with her song Neda for the opening scene of NAJMA. For BAHARI, a story about love across borders, Sharon Musyoka, a London based Kenyan musician and poet, whose girlfriend was struggling with visa issues jumped at the opportunity to write a poem in Swahili. In SHAYLA, where a magic seed changes hearts, first nation poet laureate of the Navajo Nation, Laura Tohe generously contributed her voice and poem MEETING THE SPIRIT OF WATER. London based DJ Tayylor Made, music supervisor, and Chennai based Paul Jacob, composer, both of whom immediately connected with the ethos of TRANSFINITE, composed futuristic music combining multicultural classical and electronic rhythms. They interwove their bespoke compositions with tracks made by other trans\* and queer musicians Jasminie Infiniti, Jessica Lauren, Kohinoorgasm and Snipah Wolf.

I strived to make TRANSFINITE a platform where trans\* artists of color and crew with varied levels of experience came together to learn, connect, grow and create. I am humbled and deeply proud that the entirety of this project is held by the queer and trans people of color and their loyal friends in California, London, Chennai and Benguluru. From brutal hate crimes to abject silences, trans\* people of color have been subjected to violences of many kinds at every corner of the globe in every rung of any society, TRANSFINITE is a vibrant celebration of the everyday strength, resilience and beauty we continue to bring to this world.



## WRITER / DIRECTOR / EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Neelu Bhuman

Neelu Bhuman is an independent artistfilmmaker exploring social and political themes as they play out in close relations. Playfully evoking insights into the workings of difference in intimacy, her films blend viewpoints ranging from race, gender, sexuality, culture, class and romance.

Pushing these themes in FU377 (2014) and More Love. Less Prepackaged Bullshit (2017), Neelu's films purposefully move towards abstract retellings of the problematics of identity categories and foregrounding varieties of resilience and resistance to experiences of duress - both immediate and political. FU377 (2014) has won best animation awards in New Delhi, New York City and Kolkata film festivals, while Love Letter/Prema Lekha (2016) garnered the best short in Graphic Arts category at the Tunis Chouftouhonna Feminist Festival in Tunisia. His films have screened world-wide including top-tier LGBTQ+ film festivals such as San Francisco's Frameline, LA's Outfest, London's BFI Flare, Mumbai's Khashish and more. Two of their films, FU377 (2014) and More Love. Less Prepackaged Bullshit (2017) are being distributed by the Canadian film distribution company CFMDC.

They are currently touring the world-wide film festival circuit with TRANSFINITE, an omnibus feature film, set in the San Francisco Bay Area featuring seven stories by and about trans and gender non-conforming people of colour, executive produced by D'Lo, Sujatha Jayagopal, Marc Smolowitz, and Andrew Nicholson and produced by Stefano Gonzalez.

#### http://filmsofneelu.com



### **EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

#### Marc Smolowitz » San Francisco Bay Area, USA

Marc Smolowitz is a multi-award winning director, producer and executive producer with 25+ years of experience across all aspects of the entertainment and media business. His career focus has been powerful social issue filmmaking across all genres. His long list of credits includes films that have screened at top-tier festivals - Sundance, Berlinale, AFI Docs, IDFA, DOC NYC, Tokyo, Melbourne, Viennale, Krakow, among others. His films have been successful worldwide in theatrical markets, across all forms of television, and on VOD/Digital/Educational platforms. In 2016, he received one of the prestigious IFP Fellowships to attend the Cannes Film Festival's Producers Network and Marche du Film marking him as one of nation's most influential independent producers.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, he was widely known as the President & Founder of Turbulent Arts -- a boutique, indie film distribution and sales company based in San Francisco that ranked in 1998 as the 26th largest film company in North America, 14th among independents (source: The Hollywood Reporter.) Today, he is a full-time independent filmmaker, while maintaining a thriving consulting practice called 13th Gen that guides both emerging and established filmmakers through key stages of development, fundraising, production, post, completion, and distribution. In partnership with a dynamic range of independent film partners and companies, 13th Gen also oversees the financing, marketing, sales and distribution efforts of a vibrant portfolio of films and filmmakers, many of which Smolowitz produces and/or directs.

#### **HONORARY EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**



**D'Lo »** Los Angeles, USA

D'Lo is a queer/transgender Tamil Sri Lankan-American actor/writer/comic. You've seen D'Lo in LOOKING (HBO), TRANSPARENT (Amazon), SENSE 8 (Netflix), Mr. ROBOT (CW) and the Emmy nominated mini-doc series THIS IS ME produced by Rhys Ernst and Zackary Drucker. He also can be found in the documentary based on his life/ work called PERFORMING GIRL and Sundance Fellow Adelina Anthony's film BRUISING FOR BESOS as Rani. D'Lo is currently in development on a scripted series based on his life that is set up at BTR Media and Paul Feig's Powderkeg Media.



Andrew Nicholson London, UK

When Neelu first approached him with the nascent idea of TRANSFINITE, Andrew Nicholson was in absolute awe of the audacity of the concept: seven shorts by seven writers centering trans\* and gender-nonconforming people of color woven into a magical powerful tapestry of feature length. The project is incredibly ambitious and he is humbled and honored to be a part of such an important film and team. His roles on TRANSFINITE have ranged from post production technical supervisor to prop



#### Sujatha Jayagopal » London, UK

Sujatha Jayagopal brings 17 years of international experience strategizing business for small, medium and large enterprises specializing in enabling digital transformation where she has closed 150-million+ dollar deals. She is currently the VP of Gobal Sales for Hitachi where her focused approach along with sheer determination make her a competitive force to be reckoned with. Sujatha writes and performs stand-up comedy in her "spare" time. She lives in London with her partner, Meena Subrian, and their sweet little pug, Archie.

#### PRODUCERS



**Stefano Gonzalez** San Francisco Bay Area, USA

Stefano Gonzalez is a trans Latinx Producer with an MFA in Motion Pictures and Television. In addition to running his emerging production company Transgress Studios LLC based in Oakland, he has made six short films. His short script, How To Kill Someone You Hate, won Best Short Film and Best Directing awards at the 2014 Epidemic Film Festival. Rebel Child, directed by Juan Davis and co-produced by Stefano, won Best Emerging Artist award at the 2015 Pictoclik Film Festival in San Francisco. His latest coproduction, Do They Fit?, was an Official Selection of Cannes Short Film Corner 2016. Mr. Gonzalez currently resides in Alameda, CA with his wife, her son, and his two pups.



Anten Edilbert Chennai, India

Anten Edilbert has more than a decade of experience in Indian Film Industry as Director, Editor, Line Producer and Lecturer at LV Prasad for both Production and Post Production. He has worked in titles like Singam 3, Kabali, 2.0, Black Panther, Avengers and more than 75 short Films. Owning Simple films, he has produced ads for corporate giants like AbInBev, Nike, Budweiser and Nandu Lungies. Has also been a part of Three city BTLIFF Film festival by American Consulates. A festival for journalists who put their life at risk as the Chief Technical Coordinator. He is proud to be a part of this omnibus feature film, TRANSFINITE, that deals with a variety of spiritual and socio-political issues.



#### **SEVEN STAR WRITERS**

Neelu invited various brilliant trans\* artists of color from California to write short screenplays for TRANSFINITE. They requested each writer to explore a specific political theme while giving power to their story's trans\* protagonist. Using poetry, animation and VFX, these stories blur the line between the magical and the real, personal and political.



#### **Blossom C. Brown**

Blossom C. Brown is an actress and producer, known for Transfinite (2018), Case Management and Lit Girl (2019).

#### Carmen K. Moore

Played Felixia in 2014 Sundance's "Drunktown's Finest".

#### Davia Spain

As a Black Trans Woman, Davia is deeply invested in using her brilliance as a performance artist, educator and filmmaker to speak truth to power.

#### D'Lo

D'Lo is a queer/transgender Tamil Sri Lankan-American actor/writer/comic. You've seen D'Lo in LOOKING (HBO), TRANSPARENT (Amazon), SENSE 8 (Netflix), Mr. ROBOT (CW) and the Emmy nominated mini-doc series THIS IS ME.

#### Harmony Rose Santana

USA's first openly transgender actress who garnered an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress for 2011 film Gun Hill Road.

## Ryka Aoki

Ryka Aoki is a Japanese American author known for her poetry collection Seasonal Velocities, a finalist for the award for transgender nonfiction in the 25th Lambda Literary Awards.

### S Angelo Acevedo

S Angelo is an actor, known for his work in most recent play Four Men In Paris (2018), films Wives with Knives (2012) and Next Week (2016).

### **Skyler Cooper**

Skyler appeared in the films ELENA UNDONE, Cheryl Dunye's THE OWLS and THE INSOMNIACS, and on television in RuPaul's Drag U.

transfinitefilm.com



#### DP \* Aja Pop »

A staple in the Bay Area LGBTQ+ filmmaking community, her recent work is as the 1AC on director Shine Louse Houston's neo-noir film, SNAPSHOT.

#### **CASTING DIRECTOR \* Tina D'Elia »**

Tina D'Elia is an award-winning multi-disciplinary artist, Latina lesbian/queer actor (SAG-AFTRA) and acting teacher based in SF Bay Area.

#### HMUA \* Risha Rox »

Risha Rox is a Black Los Angelina, interdisciplinary artist, working in the mediums of painting, performance, installation and sculpture.

#### **EDITOR \* Mariko Montpetit »**

Mariko is an award winning editor on BAFTA and academy award nominated films such as 'The Act of Killing' and 'The Look Of Silence.'

#### ILLUSTRATOR \* Rob Trujillo »

Rob is an Oakland-based artist, co-founder of The Trust Your Struggle Collective, contributor to Rad Dad, founder of Come Bien Books.

#### **ANIMATOR \* Pamela Chavez »**

Pamela is a QWOC illustrator & animator influenced by contemporary issues impacting Latinx communities.

### MUSIC SUPERVISOR \* Tayylor Made »

TAYYLOR MADE, is an American DJ/Producer based in London, established herself as an in-demand artist attracting major bookings such as Lovebox Festival and Ministry of Sound.

#### **COMPOSER \* Paul Jacob**

Paul is a critically aclaimed musician based in Chennai, South India whose vision and mission for life is to make musical collaborations across myriad boundaries.

#### **QUOTES FROM CAST & CREW**

"Working on Transfinite was a revolutionary experience for me. It taught me that it's okay to prioritize empowering myself through my art." --Davia Spain, Writer/Actor

"Being a part of this film created and directed by Neelu Bhuman was a dream come true as a Casting Director and SAG-AFTRA Queer Mixed-Race Latina Actor! Transfinite's vision and commitment to the intersectionality of Trans/Queer/GNCScreenwriters/ DP/Actors/Crew/Producers as the focus was unlike any project I had ever been a part of in film! Transfinite is groundbreaking as it stands out as the symbolic paradigm shift in the cinematic canon." -- **Tina D'Elia**, **Casting Director & SAG-AFTRA Actor!** 

"Working on Transfinite was beautiful because I knew I was part of a creative endeavor that was filled with a lot of joy and love from our QTPOC community. " -- D'Lo, Writer/Actor/EP

"I've never worked on a film like Transfinite. Working with a cast and crew largely comprised of queer, trans, and gender nonconforming people of color was absolutely magical (Yes! Magical!) and I cannot be more grateful to have been a part of this truly special and empowering project." -- Bambi Katsura, Associate Producer/AD "It's been the most transformative experience in my life, to be surrounded in an environment full of love. Despite only being the originator for the adapted screenplay, everyone awarded me so much respect and valued my input. Neelu's vision to create an all trans identified production was the catalyst for my outstanding experience!" --Lida N Vala, Writer

"I'm so proud and happy I was able to be a part of Transfinite! It was such an incredibly energizing and refreshing experience to work on a set with transgender artists and actors telling transgender stories! Much more of that please!" -- **Skyler Cooper, Actor** 

"Working on this film was an honor and an absolute treat. The child actors involved were a joy to work with, and Bhuman is an actor's director. We could feel the love eminating from behind the camera with each take. Filmed on location in the gorgeous hills of San Francisco, this project was a highlight of my year." -- Carlos Reyes Hailey, Actor



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