

## Tacoma Artists Initiative Program 2023 – 2024 funding recipients

[Anida Yoeu Ali](#)



Anida Yoeu Ali is an artist, educator, and global agitator born in Cambodia, raised in Chicago, and residing currently in Tacoma. Ali's multi-disciplinary practices include performance, installation, public encounters, and political agitation. Ali's works have been exhibited widely at the Haus der Kunst, Palais de Tokyo, Shangri-La Museum, The Smithsonian, and more. She received grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, Art Matters Foundation, Ford Foundation, and National Endowment of the Arts. Ali serves as a Senior Artist-in-Residence at the University of Washington Bothell and travels between the Asia-Pacific region and the U.S.

TAIP funding will support the re-fabrication and installation of the "Hello. How are you?" public art installation. This large-scale outdoor signage project, measuring 2 feet tall, was initially installed outside of Ali's front yard in the Hilltop neighborhood from November 2018 until March 2020. It was removed because the letters had dangerously deteriorated from the weather. With these funds, Anida and her partner Masahiro Sugano will remake them out of a more durable plastic material. This mixed media outdoor installation of letters spell out the common American greeting "Hello. How are you?" a seemingly innocuous phrase intended to invite participation between local and newer residents and between art makers and art viewers. As artists become a complicit part of urban redevelopment, they must be mindful and responsible to the existing ecology and histories in Tacoma. During the 1.5 years that the signage was up, it brought so much joy and curiosity from hundreds of local neighbors and passersby. This artwork urges accessibility – both by displaying the artwork in the Hilltop neighborhood and by putting artists in conversation to the people who live there. Anida believes art can and should happen in spaces outside of the typical and often exclusive institutions (galleries, museums, studios), spaces that are literally walled off from everyday people. As part of this artwork's effort to bridge the gap between artists and audiences, it is important that the installation be highly visible and accessible by all.

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[Luna Malia Azzouni](#)



Luna is a multimedia specialist, communicating ideas and stories through graphic design, video, and photography. She is best known for her vibrant graphics and illustrations that explore the wonderful community of flora and fauna that surround us. Through her artwork, she hopes to create joyful ways to learn about the science and cultural significance behind bees, trees, mushrooms, beavers and more! Thanks to her mom, she's been drawing since she could hold a pencil and learning about the natural world for as long as she can remember. While studying at Bates Technical College she learned about the principles of composition, the production process, and how to use the Adobe Suite. She is grateful to be able to combine her childhood passions and her technical skill into her career.

For her TAIP project, Luna is creating a children's book called Otterly Awesome: The Secret World of Otters! The book will explore these charismatic creatures, which are playful, caring, and great stewards of the environment. We have a lot we can learn from the unique way they live their lives. Otters have been an important species in the northwest for thousands of years and are essential to keeping our kelp forests healthy. They eat kelp's main predator, sea urchins, which keeps the sea urchin population in check and gives the young kelp a chance to grow. They also have unique and awesome

adaptations that help them thrive— in fact they only can thrive because of their uniqueness.

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#### [Kristina Batiste](#)



Kristina Batiste is a Tacoma-based ceramic artist. She incorporates wheel thrown and hand-built techniques in functional and sculptural projects.

With TAIP funding support, Kristina is co-producing the Tacoma Pottery Salon. The Tacoma Pottery Salon is a deliberate effort to distribute knowledge and build community; it's a mostly-monthly art salon that gives potters a forum for career retrospectives, a place to meet other potters, and, of course, eat. Although it often gets overshadowed by glass art (looking at you, Chihuly) Tacoma and the PNW has a very strong ceramics tradition and history, particularly from the generation of artists who attended the graduate programs at the University of Puget Sound and the University of Washington in the 1970s and 1980s.

There are quite a number of potters and pottery lovers in the area, but the isolation that came from COVID and the changing market scene (art fairs and galleries giving way to social media and online sales) deprives people of a chance to connect. The Tacoma Pottery Salon is an antidote to that. We welcome ALL comers: novices, experts, and appreciators alike.

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#### [Burl Battersby](#)



Burl Battersby (he/him) lives in the South End of Tacoma and writes using the pseudonym B. Eugene B. He writes poetry, fiction, and personal essays and his most recent book is *Wild Rose & Other Poems Sung by the Window*, published April 2023. He is currently working on a project to explore and create new forms of contemporary/endemic poetry.

For his project "Voices of Tacoma: A Gathering of Poets," Burl is designing and coordinating four parts of a project which will converge on the final publication. The four components include: a monthly hybrid writer's group meeting; four poetry workshops; a call for poetry submissions about or inspired by Tacoma (from poets of all ages and from anywhere); and the compilation of an anthology of Tacoma Poetry (to be published in Fall 2024).

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#### [Jaziré Ché](#)



Photo Credit:  
Salvador Jaramillo

Jaziré Ché is a multifaceted professional with a passion for entrepreneurship, music, and social justice. In fall 2023, she is launching Above the Record LLC, which is set to revolutionize the music industry through her unique and groundbreaking approach. As a singer and songwriter, Jaziré's upcoming EP 'ill-osophi'cal' is a reflection of her experiences as a black woman artist navigating relationships, trauma, and hardships.

Jaziré is proud to be collaborating with Brokey Records and The6thproduction to bring this EP to life and break down damaging philosophical concepts while shedding light on prevalent mental health issues in our society. The release party for 'ill-osophi'cal' will be held at Parable in Tacoma in August 2023. Jaziré is excited about this new chapter in her professional journey and looks forward to connecting with music lovers everywhere.

[Hadiya Finley](#)



Hadiya Finley has been making art for most of her life, exploring many techniques and materials. Most of her work has been sculptural with a focus on the female form drawn from practice with models and developed into a style that softens and rounds the forms. Hadiya's pieces have been cast in bronze or constructed from clay or papier-mâché and are often paired with mechanical elements, animals, or birds. They vary in size from intimate bronzes to larger-than-life size public art pieces.

For her TAIP project, Hadiya is collecting driftwood and other wood to make constructions of combined media, using resin, glues, thread, and wire to form abstracted figures. The piece will be exhibited at Artco Gallery in late 2024.

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[Antonio Gomez](#)

[Mary Mann](#)



Mary Mann is a painter and arts educator at the Science and Math Institute high school. She has many years of experience with public art murals and personal studio work.

She will be creating new oil paintings for her series "Rootbound". This series explores identity, relationships, and communication. Her project will include a self-portrait painting workshop for 12 teens, culminating in a group show. Mary will be painting her own self-portrait along with the students. All participants will be encouraged to explore their identity and present an artist statement in a public exhibition.

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[Hugo Moro](#)



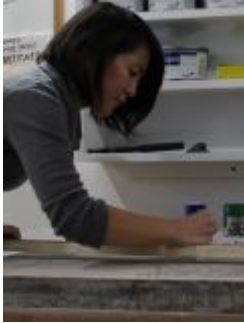
[Roxann Murray](#)



Roxann Murray was born in the Pacific Northwest and has lived here her entire life. Her love for traveling takes her to many places, but she will always call the upper left corner of the U.S. her home. From the moment Roxann first picked up a camera over twenty years ago, she knew that photography would be a major component of her life's work.

Through the Tacoma Artists Initiative Program, she has a photography project called "Matriarch: Portraits of Indigenous Women in the Pacific Northwest Fighting for Earth and our Collective Future." It documents local Indigenous women who have taught her about preserving traditions, protecting land and water, caring for community, and coming to terms with her own heritage and colonial trauma. This project will be exhibited at Alma Tacoma in Autumn of 2024.

### [Yoshi Nakagawa](#)



Yoshi Nakagawa is a visual artist and gardener, born in Tacoma and raised in Portland, OR. Specializing in printmaking for over 20 years, she pulled her first print at the University of Puget Sound, and continued her craft in Seattle and Oaxaca, Mexico. Her artwork is influenced by patterns of the natural world and Japanese textiles, along with her experiences living in Oaxaca and Japan. She has exhibited and taught workshops in the US, Mexico, Canada, Japan, South Africa, and Honduras. She resides in the Tacoma Hilltop neighborhood.

Yoshi's project *Furusato*, meaning homeland in Japanese, is a series of paper quilts, hand sewn together from relief and monotype images of Northwest flora and landscapes, hand printed on Japanese washi paper. Some washi is dyed in natural pigments like indigo. This project explores and acknowledges homeland, specifically friendships and the mutual generosity between Native American and Japanese-American individuals—both communities bonded by empathy for the loss of their land and homes. The project involves learning about natural dyeing processes from local farmers, working directly on the land from seed to plant to pigment. The exhibition of *Furusato* and a Northwest native plant transfer printmaking workshop will be held at Asia Pacific Cultural Center. Tacoma Public Library's Moore and Kobetich branches will also host two free workshops. The plant transfer prints from the workshops will be sewn together as a community quilt, patching and mending wounds while creating a sense of home.

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### [Vernon Ng](#)



Vernon Ng is an interdisciplinary artist and English professor at Pierce College. His project “Tacoma Inspection Tour” adapts classical Chinese scholarly practices to examine the history of race and ethnicity—and its public representation—in Pierce County. Through a series of ink rubbings and landscape photographs, his project explores local sites that hold complex, overlapping meanings especially for Asian American and Native communities. A set of bound rubbings and photographs will be donated to the Northwest Room at the Tacoma Public Library.

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### [Yixuan Pan](#)



Yixuan Pan is from the land of fish and rice, where she grew up speaking Mandarin Chinese. As an adult, she has traveled and moved frequently for education and work. As such, she has been long disconnected from her mother tongue, operating almost exclusively in a foreign language in her adult and professional life. Reflecting on her fraught experiences with communication and expression—the difficulty of getting a simple point across—she has decided to keep being confused about language. Pan’s lack of knowledge has become the creative fuel that powers her curiosity and explorations.

Currently, she is expanding on these ideas of collective miscommunication and cultural dislocation by making an immersive ASMR cooking show in which participants will be led through a series of collective cooking activities to make Chinese dumplings.

### [Melinda Raebyne](#)



Melinda Raebyne is an award-winning Taiwanese American filmmaker who's fascinated and inspired by the resiliency of the human spirit. Learning of other people's journeys reinforces her belief that in each of us there's a hero's story waiting to be told. A self-taught filmmaker, Melinda received most of her training as an actor on set. After almost ten years of acting in other people's films, Melinda decided to make her own; films that speak from her heart, told through the voices of society's invisible. Giving a voice to those who are typically forgotten in our society. Currently, Melinda serves on the board for WA Lawyers for the Arts and WA Filmworks Film Leadership Council.

"Through understanding, compassion is possible and with compassion, great change can happen." – Melinda Raebyne

AN INTIMATE LOOK COVID-19 – YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE is a short documentary within a documentary series, giving the world insight on how our kids see and experience COVID-19. We are all connected and have the ability to empower one another, even in the middle of a pandemic and a social awakening. What wisdom can they provide to us?

Even in chaos there is beauty. In order for a flower to bloom from a seed, the seed must be buried in the earth's dark soil, and cracked open so the roots can grow, giving the flower nourishment and stability to blossom. In this same way, the world was going through a powerful moment of transformation and growth with COVID-19. Our children's voice will provide an innocent but honest insight into how they blossomed through COVID. They are the seeds. COVID is the soil. How they were able to transform can give nourishment to us, reminding us we are also able to blossom. Through their experiences we are able to heal as a whole, inspiring us in how to move forward, how to hold ourselves accountable, and how to break down the barriers that keep us divided due to geographic, racial, economic, and spiritual differences. It is through the hardest times that we realize our strength and that maybe the hero we have been in search of all this time was within us all along.

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### [Ricky Loves Painting](#)



Tacoma native, Ricky Loves Painting, has been obsessed with fonts since grade school. He has painted murals since 2009 but has focused on word murals with positive messages for the last 6 years. Ricky describes his work as love letters to the city. His art is influenced by optical illusion, type design and classic American sign painting.

With the Tacoma Artists Initiative Program funding, Ricky will collaborate with Kwabi Amoah-Forson on a PEACE mural to help promote Kwabi's message of non-violence, compassion, kindness, and peace. As part of the production process, the public will be invited to assist in the painting of the mural on a community paint day.



### [Addy Sandoval](#)



Addy Sandoval, also known as “addisuns” is a 30 year old Queer Chicano artist raised in Tacoma. Addisuns often spends his time online engaging with others on social media where he has a platform as a Two-Spirit activist and influencer promoting dialogue between Indigenous communities as well as gaining understanding and unity between marginalized groups of people.

Addy is non-binary and uses he/they pronouns, he explores the topic of identity through writing, speech, poetry, music, and conversations with others on platforms like Instagram or his Decolonization Podcast on YouTube. Addy strongly believes in individuality and creative expression; he created an IG page called Digita1style as a selfie diary promoting self-love but also modeling customized thrifted outfits. These photos become the album and single covers for Addisuns’ music, released under Addy’s record label named Digita1style Music. Addisuns’ music is recorded by live mixing and layering instrumental loops. Addy is heavily influenced by Jazz, Soul, Hip-Hop, Video Game soundtracks and Electronic music. Since 2014, Addy has been recording over 400 live beats on his phone using free software and has gotten one track featured in the 2022 LA indie film, *El Marijuano*.

Addy plans on hosting a couple of live virtual sessions open to the public during summer 2023. Hosted on Facebook Live or Zoom and recorded to be uploaded to YouTube. The purpose of the live sessions will be exploring or discovering your identity, who you are and where/who you come from. Addy will facilitate dialogue and discussion on how identity influences and fuels artistic creativity and how healing in itself is an art. Throughout the stream Addy will be showcasing music from local artists, centering Indigenous, Queer, and BIPOC artists as well as streaming new music he will have made through this project. Addy will be promoting the event through social media and with the help of the Office of Arts and Cultural Vitality’s communications. You can check out Addy’s music on any streaming platform by searching for “addisuns” and you can find him on Instagram as @indigenounity or @digita1style.

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### [Sophie Marie Schatz](#)



Sophie Marie is a queer dance artist from Tacoma, WA. Sophie has a degree in Neuroscience and Dance from Bennington College. Sophie’s work focuses on embodiment, folklore, and horror. As an avid lover of fairy tales and horror movies, Sophie seeks to create new and weird worlds with her work. They are inspired by nature, myth, and monsters.

*Vampyre: A Strange Fiction Dance Piece*, is exploring the iconography of the vampire through movement, and queer and disabled embodiment practices. Utilizing folklore, popular imagery, and campy-horror style dance this work seeks to explore vampires throughout modern history and their connection to the queer and disabled experience. Premiering at Crescent Moon gifts on Sept. 23rd and 24th, 2023.

### [Daniella Shepherd](#)



Daniella Shepherd is a Guatemala-born American new media artist and community-based educator. She received her MFA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and BFA from Eastern Washington University. Her artistic practice is focused on exploring the Guatemala Genocide through sports and games as metaphors to conceptualize the inner workings of social structures, and she developed an experimental digital game “Rhizome of Ixil” to analyze the Mayan genocide trial for her master’s thesis. In addition, she has exhibited her body of mixed media artworks on this topic at various galleries and museums, including the Saranac Gallery, the Northwest Museum of Art and Culture, and Figure One Gallery. As an extension of her artistic practice, she has taught across a variety of educational institutions, including FabLab Tacoma, Champaign-Urbana Community Fab lab, Tacoma Public Schools, and more, where she engages students from various backgrounds in art and design processes with a range of technologies, including animation, 3D printing, digital embroidery, CNC laser cutting, and more. Currently, she is serving as a Career and Technical Educator at Wainwright Intermediate Tacoma Public School.

With the support of TAIP funding Daniella plans to investigate, remediate, and showcase the embroidery codes embedded within indigenous Mayan textiles through ceramic 3D Printing for public engagement. As an Indigenous new media artist, she considers this project as an important step towards providing voice and recognition to Indigenous Mayan culture, a technologically advanced culture with many cutting-edge innovations that are still being re-discovered today. The Tacoma community is invited to participate in a series of workshops at FabLab Tacoma Non-Profit. Participants will have the opportunity to collaborate as a group to design a model that reflects textiles in their lives. Their design will be 3D printed and be added to Daniella’s body of work to be showcased. Participants will also learn the fundamentals of ceramic 3D printing and bring home a 3D printed piece of art.

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### [Masahiro Sugano](#)



Masahiro Sugano, a Sundance Film Fest alumnus, is an award-winning filmmaker whose accolades stretch from a Student Academy Award nomination in 1997 to the 2016 Documentary Award given by the National Asian American Journalists Association, and his most recent 2020 Art Matters Foundation Award. Through his media lab Studio Revolt, Sugano has created short films on the issue of deportation as well as a pioneering force in the art of spoken word videos. Sugano received the 2013 Center for Asian American Media’s Innovation Fund for his series “VERSES IN EXILE” which is on view at PBS online. Sugano’s second feature “CAMBODIAN SON” is the winner of several international awards including 2016 Best Documentary Award given by the National Asian American Journalists Association, Golden Hanoman Prize at the Jogja Asian Film Festival and the Special Jury Prize at Cultural Resistance Film Fest of Lebanon 2014. He earned a BA in philosophy from Cal State Northridge and an MFA in film/animation from the University of Illinois-Chicago. His films screen internationally, in cinemas, museums, schools and prisons. Sugano currently lives in Tacoma and is Senior Artist-in-Residence at the University of Washington Bothell where he teaches courses in art, filmmaking, and global studies.

TAIP funding will be used towards the final editing and post-production phase of Masahiro’s third feature film project titled If Hafez Read Haikus for Cowboys. This film weaves together 50 mundane lives with improvised narratives filmed across 3 countries:

Japan, Iran, and the US. Hafez refers to a beloved Persian poet from the 14th century often quoted by local Iranians during Masahiro's 2019 month-long Tehran residency when the film was originally conceived. Masahiro shot the film on his own in Tehran, Osaka, Kyoto, and Nagasaki. In 2020, despite the COVID-19 disruption, he pushed to complete the final US episodes with actors in Tacoma, Colorado Springs, and Philadelphia. In every city, Masahiro offered his actors the same direction with the statement, "If you are looking for something, you will not find it. If you are waiting for someone, they never show up." His ambitious editing process has resulted in the first rough assemblage cut comprised of 25 episodes, 50 characters, 5 languages, 3 countries, and 9 cities and clocking in at 4 hours long. Masahiro feels an urgency and heavy responsibility to complete "Hafez" now more than ever as the Iranian people, mostly youth, women, and artists, are currently risking their lives to protest the Iranian regime.

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#### [Merilee Tanbara](#)



Merilee Tanbara is a third-generation Japanese American. Her mother's parents are from the island of Kyushu and during the turn of the century immigrated to Tacoma where her mom and her aunts were born. Her parents met in Wyoming at a concentration camp called Heart Mountain, then many years later, married and raised their family in Tacoma, where Merilee's children were born as well.

After Merilee's mother died, she gave her eulogy - a collection of stories from her family. Now Merilee is writing a novel based on these stories, as well as interviews from family friends. The book begins in the 1920s inside Tacoma's Japanese community with a population of two thousand living and working in Tacoma's downtown core. In 1941, the characters experience the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Empire, then mass incarceration in remote areas of the US interior, and finally rebuilding their lives after the camps. The book is historical fiction, so the characters are not family members, but instead from her imagination. Merilee explores questions such as, what was it like to be an American when you look like the enemy? How does that shape your life? What were the hardships of camp? How does it feel to come home to Tacoma and your community is gone?

Merilee's mother earned her bachelor's degree from the College of Puget Sound, now referred to as the University of Puget Sound. Merilee received her higher education outside of Tacoma; a bachelor's degree from the University of Redlands and Parson School of Design, and a Master of Public Administration from Evergreen State College. She is a member of the Omoide Project, a writers group supported by the Nikkei Heritage Association of Washington and the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Washington.

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#### [Nicole Turner](#)



Nicole Turner is a self-taught textile artist who makes both two-dimensional and wearable art pieces. Her primary tools are her sewing machine and her weaving looms.

For her TAIP project Nicole will be creating a collection of textile pieces, some wearable, featuring fabric supplies donated from the community plus other secondhand supplies. Nicole's work aims to critique our global dependence on fast fashion which causes harm to people and our environment. Her collection and processes will be shared at three library events plus online via demonstration videos.



[Kris Vermeer](#)



Kris Vermeer has been living in Tacoma for the past 20 years and finds it to be an amazing place. She is a teaching artist, working mostly with elementary schools in Tacoma. She has been lucky enough to learn how to write curriculum to infuse arts with Common Core state standards. She is amazed to see how students understand things when taught in conjunction with the arts. Kris also works in a variety of mediums, such as painting, fused glass, and metal sculpture. She does large scale metal sculptures that have been purchased by cities like Puyallup, Des Moines, and Longview. She works in both mild steel and stainless.

Kris' TAIP project, titled "Our Community", is a clay mural that will be installed on the outside of Stafford Elementary School. The student body will discuss and create drawings based on personal family experiences and traditions. Some of the stories collected thus far include monks chanting in a first grader's living room, and Lunar New Year celebrations. The students will be involved in every part of the process including creating drawings, making and glazing clay tiles, and permanent placement of the mural at Stafford Elementary.

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[Cassio Vianna](#)



Cassio Vianna is a pianist, educator, and award-winning composer from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He moved to Tacoma in 2018 when he accepted the Director of Jazz Studies position at Pacific Lutheran University. His teaching assignments include classes in jazz theory, jazz piano, and jazz composition, as well as directing the University Jazz Ensembles.

For his TAIP project, Cassio will compose a 4-movement suite combining jazz, Brazilian popular music, and classical chamber music. "I have built my musical career in the intersection of jazz, popular, and classical traditions, and I have found that the blend of musical styles enhances creativity, broadens the possibility of collaboration, and reaches a larger audience, thus serving as a perfect metaphor for a healthy, diverse society," he explains. The newly composed piece will be 20 minutes in length, featuring a combination of a jazz trio (piano, bass, drums) and a classical woodwind quintet (flute, clarinet, oboe, French horn, and bassoon). A free, open to the public performance of the piece will be given at the Moore Public Library in Tacoma in 2024.

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[Donovan Wilson](#)



Donovan Wilson is a new filmmaker who is inspired by the transcendent power of film and its potential for artistic expression. Several years ago he decided to become a filmmaker after watching a film by Akira Kurasawa called "Sanjuro". Donovan then began a journey of watching so-called "Art House" films which opened his eyes even more to the narrative, documentary, and poetic possibilities of film. Soon after, he purchased an inexpensive camera and began making short films with his family. Over time he has pursued new and more challenging filmmaking goals including participating in a variety of local competitions and financing his own short film made specifically to submit to film festivals around the globe. Producing this film with a professional crew and actors further cemented his desire and illuminated his passion for creating works of art on film. He has dedicated his creative life to learning the art of filmmaking and storytelling and producing impactful works of art. Donovan's vision is based on the idea that film can express deep meaning beyond the sum of its parts. He is particularly intrigued by the idea of extracting narratives and parallel meanings from documentary-like observational film techniques applied to fictional storytelling. He is interested in observing real life through an actor's expression of a script or story outline.

Donovan's current project is a new short film centered around the experience of a young drug-addicted man who is experiencing homelessness on the streets of Tacoma. Visually, it will have a combination of realistic and dream-like elements in hopes of creating a visceral and immersive experience. Donovan wrote the script as a hopeful vignette about a complex and polarizing issue. His goal is to always write something hopeful and to humanize the characters in his films. This fictional story will ideally lead the viewer to have greater empathy for people dealing with these issues and go on to help others around them.