



## LUNAFEST 2023: Filmmaker Interview Questions

**Faith E. Briggs, Director, *Reclaim Your Water***

<https://www.faithebriggs.com/>

*Faith is a documentary filmmaker, creative producer, and podcast host passionate about sharing contemporary stories from diverse communities. Both behind and in front of the camera, she works with brands, nonprofit organizations, institutions, and individual creatives to create media representative of the world we live in—and the better one we are working together to create.*

- What drew you into making this film?
- Before working on this film were you a swimmer or a surfer? If so, did the experience change anything in your relationship to water, whether it be the ocean, river, lake, or a swimming pool?
- In your intro, you mention the fraught relationship Black people have to the ocean (and recreational water in general) due to the history of segregated beaches and pools. That history is an underlying effort of Natasha Smith's to increase representation in sports.
- Can you talk a bit more about the history of Black people and beaches, other exclusionary sports—running on the streets in Charlottesville, Virginia, for example—and what you see as the benefits of outdoor activities and Natasha's work.  
(Note: Jen Randall of *This is Beth* co-edited Faith's co-edited film *Prolyfyck Run Crew*, a film about a group in Charlottesville creating a safe space where Black runners are represented and all runners are welcome.)
- What kinds of films and topics are you most interested in making? Do you have any new projects in the works that you'd like to talk about?

**Sara T. Gama, Director & Producer, *Miss Chelove: From Java to the Streets of D.C.***

<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm8718007/>

<https://chelove.com/>

*Sara is an American of Arab heritage, with an international upbringing. She settled in D.C. after high school, got interested in filmmaking after appearing as an extra in a movie, and went on to attend American University's film and visual media program.*

*Cita (aka Miss Chelove) is an Indonesian American muralist who got her start as a graffiti artist in the D.C. punk scene. Her murals appear all over the country. She just completed a 4-story mural commissioned for the National Museum of Women in the Arts building on NY Avenue; on display through July 31, 2023.*

- How did you and Cita meet, and how did you come together to make the film? Were you connected through DJ-ing or the D.C. punk scene?



- Cita is a woman in a traditionally male-dominated art form. How do you hope her story will be received by viewers?
- Can you talk about the importance of the D.C. music scene to Cita and to you?
- How do you see your identity expressed or reflected in your films—or do you?
  
- Can you talk about being a woman filmmaker of Arab descent working in the United States, specifically, in the Washington, D.C. area?
- What was your favorite filming moment?
- What are you working on now? And what is Miss Chelove doing?

**Bret Parker, Director & Pete Barma, Writer & Producer, *Pete***

<https://www.petethefilm.com/our-team>

*Pete is a collaboration between director Bret Parker, a veteran in the film industry with 26 years at Pixar and an accomplished animator, and Pete Barma, lifelong educator and storyteller. Written and narrated by Pete, the film is her true story.*

- How did you two meet and what was it like working together to make this film?
- *Pete* was selected by Whoopi Goldberg to premiere in the animation program at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival. Did you meet Whoopi? Did she tell you why she chose your film? [I understand that Whoopi showed it to her nine-year-old granddaughter who said “Oh, there’s a Pete in my class!”]
- What was it like for *Pete* to be a world premiere and have your personal story play to a public audience? Did any of the reactions surprise you?

To the other kids in the cul-de-sac, *Pete* is their friend and playmate. The politics of gender don’t enter into their relationships.

- What would you say to kids who may be realizing that they, like Whoopi’s granddaughter, have “a Pete” in their class?
- What would you like to say to a kid today about finding the courage to be their authentic self?

Pete’s mom is such a determined and effective advocate for her kid—and very inspirational.

- What did your mom think of the film?
- Is her character a true portrayal of how supportive she was for you growing up?
- How can people be supportive allies to kids like Pete?
- What do you say to parents who might be trying to bring up their own Pete?



For Pete Barma:

As you tell your story, we're taken back to that first moment where you're publicly confronted about your identity.

- From where you stand now, would you have done anything differently (like wear different underwear)?
- After your first game on the team, did your community easily accept you as Pete?
- To what degree is sports essential to your story? Are you still playing baseball?

A filmmaking question for Bret:

You've had an amazing animation career at Pixar since 1996, as well as outside that studio and along with your own company.

- Can you talk a bit about animation and your creative journey in film, and how that came together in Pete?
- What new projects do you have in the works that we can look forward to?

**Jen Randall, Director, *This is Beth***

<http://jen-randall.com/>

*Jen Randall is a director and editor. She aims to empower, entertain, and challenge viewers with intricately woven, emotive narratives and a quiet sense of fun. Her work has been awarded over 40 prizes at international mountain film festivals, been sold for broadcast, gained large online followings, and distributed across international cinemas. She often quests into the wilds on adventures inspired by her subjects, from long-distance walks to big walls.*

*Note: Jen co-edited Prolyfyck Run Crew, a film about a group in Charlottesville, Virginia, creating a safe space where Black runners are represented, and all runners are welcome; co-directed by Faith E. Briggs (Reclaim Your Water) and Tim Kemple.*

- How did this film come about? Did you know Beth personally or by reputation before you started to work on it?
- What was the biggest challenge you encountered in making the film?
- Beth is very self-reflective and direct. How did you get her to be so comfortable to reveal so much about herself?
- Are you an athlete or outdoors person yourself—do you climb walls when you're not filming?
- The film has been shown to pretty much wide acclaim at events with numerous climbers and outdoorsy people in the audience. But beyond that, I'm wondering about reactions from that community and the degree to which they were gender specific.
- Is there a broader conversation among climbers and competitive climbers about well-being?



- Are there many women and other diverse filmmakers at these mountain-type film festivals?
- Your award-winning creative documentaries, you've noted, are often based on identity and landscape, or identity in landscape. Can you talk about how you see the intersection between all things adventure and creative?
- Did you stay in touch with Beth after filming? Can you give us any updates on what she's been up to since filming this doc? Do you generally stay connected to your subjects?
- What's your next project; what should we look forward to?

**Amy Bench, Director, *More Than I Want to Remember***

<https://amybench.com/>

*Amy is a Texas-based filmmaker and visual artist who is drawn to the immediacy of film and photography to tell stories of community and resilience and is dedicated to serving as a conduit for marginalized voices that need to be heard. This is her second film in a series that lifts up immigrant voices, offering intimate accounts of those seeking asylum due to violence.*

- This film, like your previous film, *A Line Birds Cannot See* (LUNAFEST 2020), is also uplifting the story of an immigrant, a refugee, who tells her story in her own words. What draws you to these stories and to your protagonists?
- How did you find and meet up with Mugeni, whose story this is?
- The film feels very intimate; how did you work to achieve this?
- While Mugeni's story is personal, it's one among many stories of numerous refugees whose lives have been disrupted by various conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and other places. What kind of research did you do into the history of the DRC? What steps did you take to ensure the authenticity of your representation?
- What accommodations did you make for the fact that Mugeni was only 14 when she fled Banyamulegne, and that her village and her life were changed forever? How did that 14-year-old point of view and the nature of memory shape the film?
- You are active as a cinematographer. I'm interested in why you chose animation to tell Mugeni's story.
- Can you tell us about your team and how Maya Edelman became the animation director for the film. How was the design of the film developed?
- How did Mugeni become a producer (rather than the "subject"?). What is Mugeni doing now?
- And what can we look forward to next from you?



**Kausar Mohammed, Screenwriter, Producer & Actor, *Syed Family Xmas Eve Game Night***  
<https://www.syedfamilymovie.com>  
<https://www.kausarmohammed.com>

*Note: The film's materials cite USC's Annenberg Inclusion Initiative and Pillars Fund landmark report, which underscores what the film's creatives have been feeling as queer Muslim women and nonbinary people in the film industry. "Muslim characters are missing in popular film." Muslims make up 24% of the world's population, but the report found that out of nearly 9,000 film-speaking parts, fewer than 2% were Muslim with only one LGBTQ+ Muslim character.*

[View the full report here](#)

- What is the origin story of this film?
- What was your creative collaboration with director Fawzia Mirza like? How about the rest of the team?
- The point of view of the film has us really rooting for Noor and Luz! Do you want to talk about the importance of Muslim, Brown, and LGBTQ+ representation on the screen?
- How did the production team meet the inevitable challenges of production during COVID?
- There's a wonderful spontaneity to the film, and it's truly hilarious. Were the actors always on script or was there improvisation?
- Was it anywhere as much fun to make the film as it is for us to watch it?
- Can you talk about your other activities—like with the South Asian sketch comedy team, The Get Brown, and the consulting group you cofounded called SHIFT.
- What is next for you and for talented director Fawzia Mirza?

**Samantha Sanders, Director, *Swimming Through***  
<https://greenriverfilms.com/>

*Sam is primary producer-director for Green River Films. She has written, directed, and produced documentary programs that have been broadcast on television networks including National Geographic, A&E, MSNBC, and PBS. Her films have played in festivals throughout the world and have won awards internationally, including a CINE Golden Eagle and three Chicago/Midwest regional Emmys. Additionally, Sam teaches courses in the film department at Columbia College Chicago.*

*"Expertly paced, the film successfully condenses a complex story of isolation, grief, and resilience into a tiny nutshell. A synergy of images, music, and narrative conveys both the immense majesty of the lake and the enveloping emotions of the three women featured."*



- How did you learn about the Point Swimmers? And how did you approach them to tell their stories?
- There must be some critical things to know about polar bear swimming. How did the women learn how to swim through cold water in the wintertime?
- In addition to being an accomplished and recognized filmmaker, you are also a landscape photographer. While you worked with a cinematographer in this film, most likely you had your own ideas about how you wanted the film shot. The land, sky, and water shots do so much to create a particular tone and feeling in the film. Can you talk about creating that?
- Promontory Point in Hyde Park is a section of the Chicago shoreline well known to that community and of its significant historical importance. There have been efforts to “rehabilitate” it and change the nature of the limestone formations, which have met with community resistance. Can you tell us more about this special place and its preservation efforts?
- What are you working on now?