



2022 Next Step Fund Sample Grant Application

## **Atlas Phoenix**

### **Pronouns**

They/Them/Theirs

### **Project Name**

Beautiful Boi

### **Project Description**

Funding to Atlas O. Phoenix to research, develop, and write monologues for their experimental documentary, Beautiful Boi, a film about their gender transition and mental health journey of 41 years.

### **The Artist**

1. I'd describe my films and artistic vision as deliberately creating something inconvenient: the truth in its varying shades and textures. If my work makes viewers uncomfortable, it's working.

A quote I resonate with: Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable. I want to encourage viewers to move past their comfort zone towards discovering themselves, their world views, attitudes, and the way they see themselves.

A compliment I received that both troubled and relieved me was a man/a father who watched my film, Do I Qualify for Love? at the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts this past October. Deeply heartbroken, he said, "I'm not the same person after seeing your film. Everything I thought I knew about parenting completely shifted. I'm so sorry for what happened to you." Watching him talk to me, he couldn't stand still. He couldn't always make eye contact. As he told me this and more, it was like watching him wrestle with his spirit. He moved his arms, back, and hips. He walked towards me and moved back to collect more thoughts and moved forward again. For a moment, I felt bad for him, that I had shown him something so awful he was struggling to reconcile it within himself.

Reflecting on that moment, I see it as a teaching moment for both of us. I learned how powerful my work is and that it could summon the truth he held to be true and replace it with something tangible and visceral. I gave him a vision that made him challenge his views, his attitude, and the way he saw himself as a parent. It was one of the most significant moments of my budding career. I'll see more of this, in the future, with Beautiful Boi.

Achievements include being nominated in 2020 for 6 awards at the Black Continental Independent Movie Awards for my second short narrative film in 19 years, Little Men. I received a Honorable Mention trophy from this festival. It received another Honorable Mention from Deep Focus Film Festival in Brooklyn, NY, in 2021. Little Men won several awards and was nominated at different film festivals around the world. It was an official selection for the Minneapolis St Paul International Film Festival, also in Bucharest, London and Rapport, England, Seattle, and Gary, Indiana, along with others. It won an Award of Recognition at IndieFest in La Jolla, California. Additionally, it won two REMI awards (Silver and Platinum), for the screenplay and film, at the Worldfest Houston International Film Festival in 2018/2020.

My third short film, Do I Qualify for Love? was created in 2020. This experimental documentary also screened at the Minneapolis St Paul International Film Festival where it was included in Best of the Fest and competed for Best Short Documentary in 2021. It screened in London and Birmingham, England, North Carolina, DC, and Gary, Indiana, so far. It was my second time at the Gary festival for the second year in a row.

I've won grants from the Jerome Foundation, MN State Arts Board, and VSA MN for my films and screenplays since 1999. I received an Honorarium from the prestigious Sundance Institute for a grant I applied for and didn't get in 2021. They are tracking Beautiful Boi and asked me to keep them updated and to apply again. I've been commissioned to write 5 essays, for the Walker Art Center's MN Artists, about the process and progress of my new film, Beautiful Boi. Two of them were published November 2021.

2. My artistic goal is to be a mid-career artist within 5 years. Creating Beautiful Boi will place me there as a seasoned filmmaker who writes, produces, and directs. I am creating a body of work that resembles competency, originality, and a drive to push past my own comfort zone by presenting work that critically challenges viewers.

3. These funds will help pay for my time to research, develop, and write monologues for Beautiful Boi. My time will be spent doing an archeological dig of my life pertaining to my gender transition and my mental health journey of 41 years.

## **The Project**

1. Beautiful Boi, a documentary, asks the question: How do you love yourself when you've never been taught how?

Beautiful Boi is an autobiographical self-portraiture of my life as a disabled trans person coping with mental health disorders. At the beginning of my gender transition, early 2021, shortly after turning 50, I wondered if there were stories of 50+, disabled, biracial BIPOC rebuilding and restructuring their mental health as they transition.

In my research, I didn't find much about BIPOC trans people. I decided to create a film that might be a survival guide for those with the same need for representation and self-reflective stories going beyond short informational YouTube videos.

Beautiful Boi shares self-reflections and self-examinations about my life and transition from female to transmasculine detailing my mental health journey since 1984.

Beautiful Boi is urgent, important, and timely, because the trans lens often reflects the lives of those who are young and white, from everyday people to celebrities. I want to broaden the canon of trans stories. I want to expand the narrative around trans identities. My goal of telling the truth in my films is reflected in this film project as I'm using myself as the subject, the only true source of my truth and identity.

I'll produce, write, and direct the film through 2024. I'll submit it to film festivals starting late 2024. Over the grant period, I'll write monologues reflecting the aesthetic of my previous work, *Do I Qualify for Love?*. I see the film in black and white, with ethereal, surreal music by local musicians. I'll incorporate stop-motion animation experimenting with line drawings, photos, and collages. Shots with talking heads/environmental footage, archival footage, and photos along with written monologues will be included.

2. Taking place in Minneapolis, MN, the activities covered by this grant are: research, development, and writing monologues. My work will be spent researching the internet, articles, holding conversations with QTPOC and LGBTQIA2+ members, reading/pulling from my journals dating back to 1989, and reading books about mental health, trans identities, and personal transformation. The monologues will be written after I outline and develop questions from my research.

3. My goal with this project is to share myself, my transition, and my mental health journey. The theme is about creating a life worth living based on my values with hope for a brighter future.

The project aligns with my artistic goals of creating vital new work for my first feature film. I've made 3 short films in 22 years. These longer shorts range from 14 to 46 minutes. Beautiful Boi will be 55-75 minutes. The grant provides an opportunity to create on a larger scale giving me more responsibility and the luxury of time to tell my story. This work will challenge viewers to think critically about my trans experience. The grant is an opportunity to strengthen my artistic vision and abilities.

## **Project Budget Expenses**

### Project Budget Expenses

I request \$4,600 for artist compensation for the goals and activities related to my new experimental documentary, Beautiful Boi.

Being funded gives me the necessary opportunity to advance my career and artistic development goals. It will help me create a competent, original, and provocative body of work making it congruent with my previous work as it expands my repertoire both in accumulated films and skill sets.

These expenses reflect both the goals and activities of the project. These activities will overlap at certain points.

Expenses:

Artist compensation for Atlas O. Phoenix: 230 hours TOTAL @ \$20 Per Hour = \$4,600

50 hours of Research (July 2022 to October 2022)

60 hours of Development (September 2022 to December 2022)

120 hours of Monologue Writing (November 2022 to July 2023)

Individual Taxes for Grant = \$400

GRAND TOTAL: \$5,000

## **Total Project Cash Expenses**

\$5,000.00

## **Amount Requested**

\$5,000.00