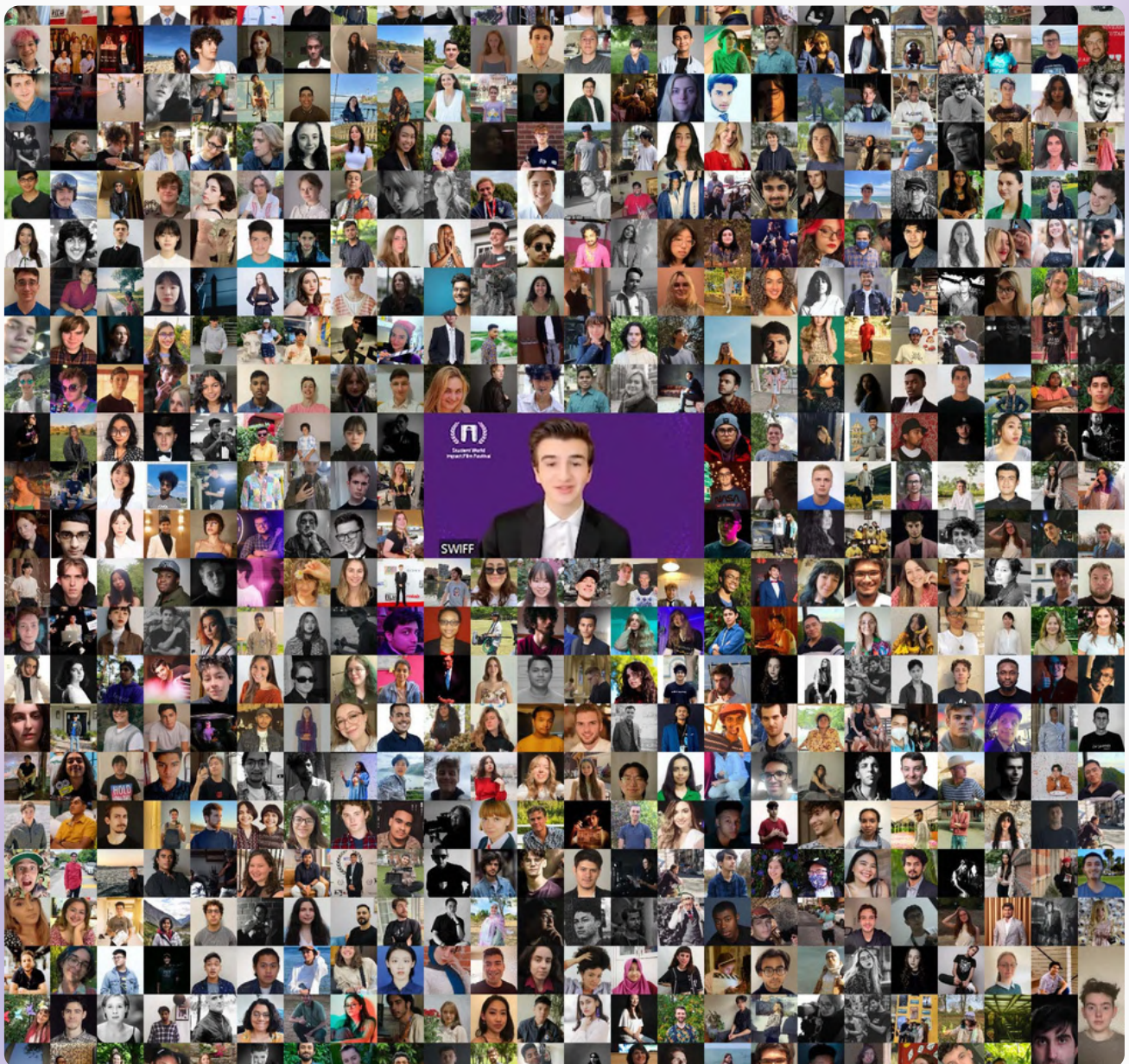




Student World  
Impact Film Festival™

YEARLY REPORT

# 2022-23 Impact Report



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# Message from the Founder & Executive Director

"Within its first year, SWIFF has grown from a local idea to an international movement empowering **12,100** young artists in **120** countries."

As long as I can remember, I have been mesmerized by the magic of storytelling. At age 11, I created my first film, "The Lighthouse" (2017). It highlighted my teacher who guided his students to success, just as a lighthouse guides ships in the darkness. In the following years, I created three additional films focused on education and social impact.

The power of storytelling is incredible. Stories have the power to transform perspectives, connect people, and inspire change. However, as a Ukrainian filmmaker, I have learned that not all storytellers have equal opportunities to share their voices. Young and low-income filmmakers are hindered by submission fees at film festivals, and often, young BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) filmmakers struggle with limited resources and discrimination due to race, ethnicity, gender, and other marginalized identities.

To address these inequalities, I created the Student World Impact Film Festival (SWIFF), a global film festival that celebrates the power of film to create positive change by showcasing student voices from marginalized communities. SWIFF celebrates diverse films with impactful messages from young storytellers by streaming films live to global audiences during the festival.



PREPARED BY  
**Mark Leschinsky**

PREPARED FOR  
**SWIFF Global Stakeholders**

# Impact at a Glance

The Student World Impact Film Festival (SWIFF) has been an international catalyst in amplifying the voices of marginalized storytellers. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, SWIFF is dedicated to breaking down barriers, providing a platform for diverse voices, and fostering belonging for young artists worldwide.



**17,005**

Films showcased



**12,156**

Filmmakers empowered



**149**

Countries represented



**357,848**

Learners viewed SWIFF educational articles



**806**

Film reviewers and volunteers inspired to join the team

Generous support from:

Google

Canva



Microsoft



Davidson Institute

BILL of RIGHTS  
INSTITUTE



TACO BELL



Riley's Way  
foundation

CIVICS  
UNPLUGGED



Engy Haytham from Egypt  
SWIFF Filmmaker

Media coverage:

Bloomberg

NJ



PBS



Nasdaq

88.3fm  
WBGO.org

yahoo!  
finance

News  
Channel 8  
on your side

# SWIFF: A Multi-Faceted Movement

To empower young filmmakers globally in every aspect of the word "empower," SWIFF engages in impact in four key areas:

1. Organizing its flagship film festival
2. Publishing online educational filmmaking articles
3. Hosting the Film Sessions Podcast
4. Publishing an educational children's book



## Film Festival

SWIFF catalyzes cross-cultural dialogue and provides a global stage for young filmmakers to showcase their narratives.



## Film Sessions Podcast

The podcast illuminates personal stories of festival participants, offering listeners insights into their inspiring journeys.



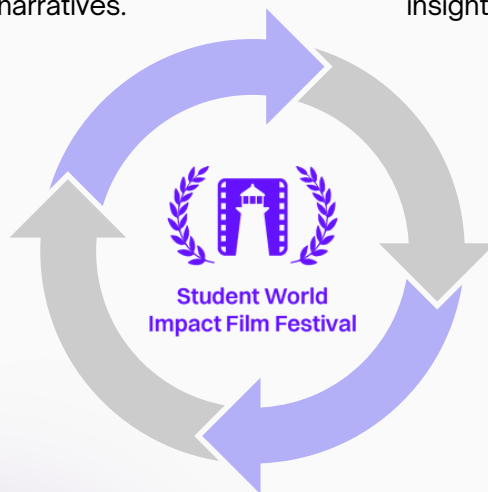
## Educational Articles

SWIFF's articles nurture aspiring filmmakers, amplifying their creative potential through invaluable insights.



## Children's Book

SWIFF's children's book inspires the storytellers of tomorrow, fostering a more inclusive cinematic future.



# A Global, Diverse Team

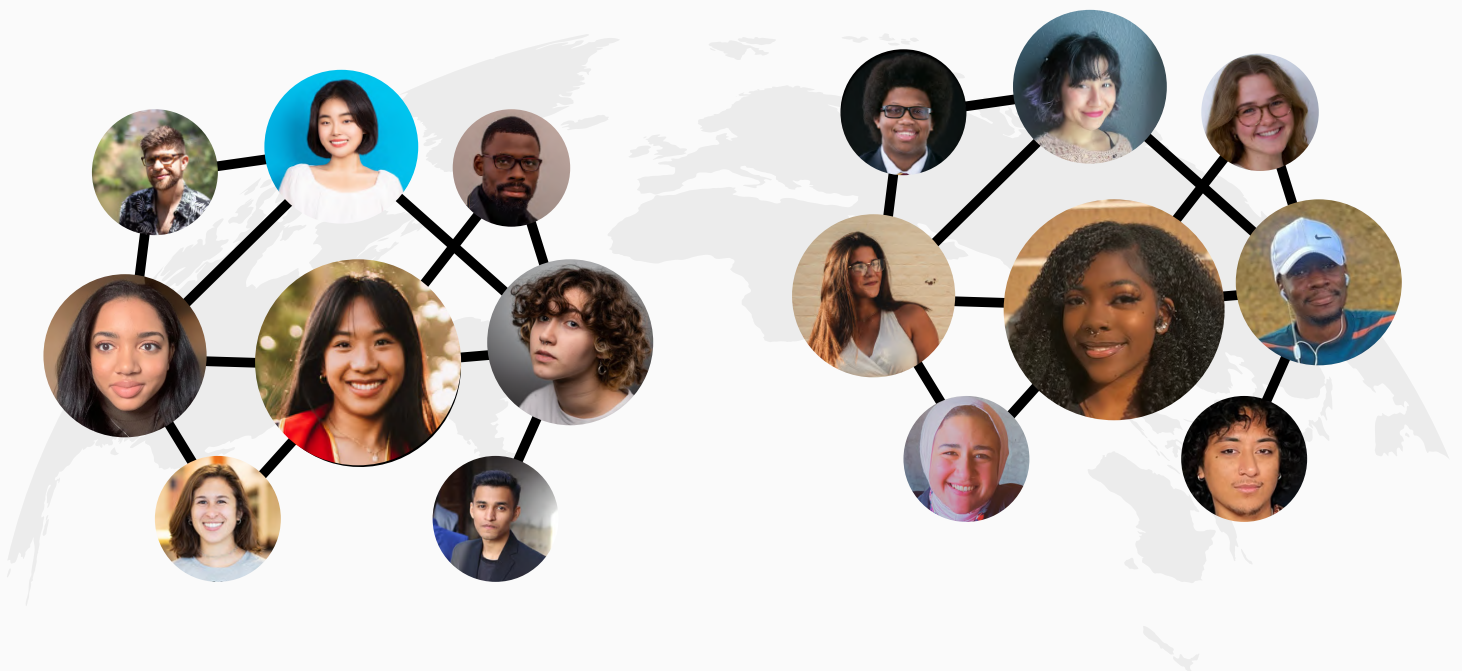
SWIFF, a student-led nonprofit, unites a global team of diverse students to drive social impact. With over 800 team members worldwide, SWIFF's approach empowers each individual, led by Executive Director Mark Leschinsky, to shape and amplify SWIFF's transformative initiatives.

 **806**

Film reviewers and volunteers

 **89**

Countries represented



"At SWIFF, we embrace the world's vibrant tapestry of cultures, recognizing that true innovation and impactful change stem from the harmonious collaboration of diverse minds. Our global team, spanning six continents, reflects our belief that every individual possesses the power to shape SWIFF's future."

**Mark Leschinsky**

Founder & Executive Director



# Film Festival: Quantitative Impact

## Cumulative Impact:

 **17,005**

Films showcased

 **12,156**

Filmmakers empowered

 **149**

Countries represented

## Survey Results with 414 SWIFF Responders:

**1 in 4** 

Participants stated SWIFF was their first festival, meaning SWIFF provided **3,025** storytellers with their very first opportunity to crack into the film festival circuit.

**98.6%**

Participants agreed that “the absence of submission fees at SWIFF provided a greater opportunity to showcase my work compared to festivals that charge fees.”

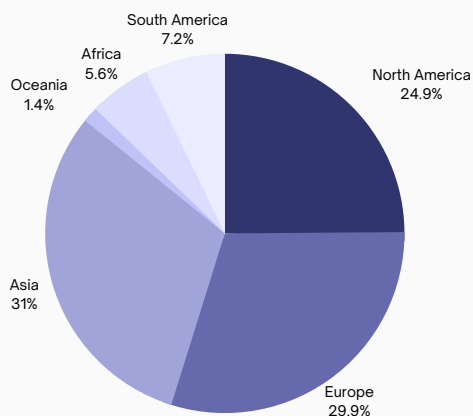
**81.9%**

Participants agreed that “participating in SWIFF provided me with unique opportunities that I have not had before in my filmmaking career.”

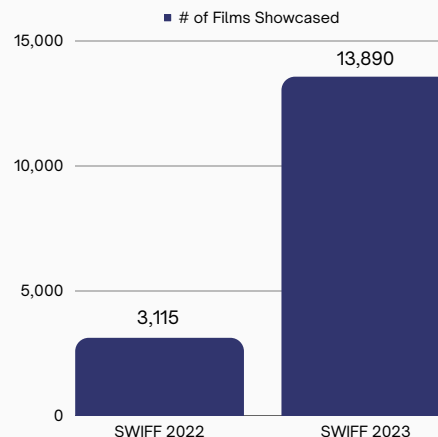
**94.7%**

Participants believe that SWIFF is a unique festival—by waiving all submission fees with a nonprofit mission—compared to traditional festivals in the industry.

## SWIFF Filmmakers by Continent



## Films Per SWIFF Season



# Film Festival: Qualitative Impact



567 Reviews Averaging 4.8 Stars



"Thank you, SWIFF, [for] being [the] first-ever platform for my film to be showcased to the world. [It] has really changed the look of people [in my village] towards me as a filmmaker. Those who knew about my film being nominated for [SWIFF] now contact me for gigs... it has created trust among some of the producers, directors, and other filmmakers in me. Before SWIFF, it was really hard for someone to call me to work, but now, producers are calling me to work with them... I will always submit my film to SWIFF as long as it's still there, and this time it has inspired me to submit a feature film."

**Ocakacon R.**

Uganda



"After submitting to so many festivals and getting rejected, I was beginning to become discouraged. I started to lose some of my motivation and creativity. When SWIFF reached out to me, they brought my filmmaking spark back! They truly understood my creative vision like none else had. Their feedback made me want to work even harder on the next film."

**Aria B.**

Georgia, USA



"Coming from a low-income family... filmmakers in situations similar to mine often find themselves on a struggle against the odds: there are not enough national festivals to gather half of all Brazilian students' works... It is very empowering to have our film selected and to be a part of such an interesting international showcase, as we often struggle..."

**Arantxa P.**

Brazil



# Partnership with Amazon Prime Video

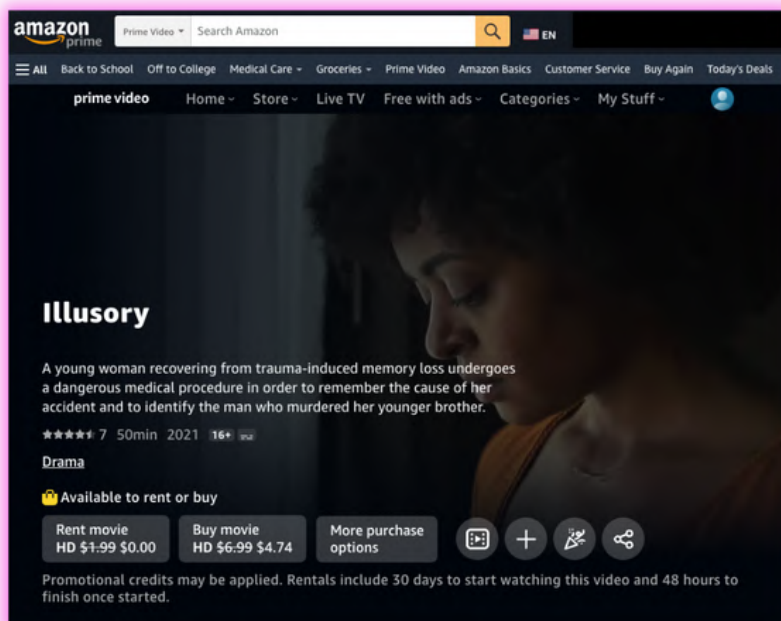
In its ongoing mission to empower emerging artists, SWIFF achieved a significant milestone in 2022. SWIFF became the first student-led organization to secure distribution status with Amazon Prime Video as an Amazon Prime Video Direct Distribution Partner, propelling SWIFF students' films onto a global stage. Now, these diverse narratives have the opportunity to potentially engage millions of viewers across the United States and the United Kingdom.



Film distributed internationally from SWIFF 2022



Films anticipated to be distributed internationally from SWIFF 2023



**LaToya Ebony**

Star of "Illusory" on Prime Video



# SWIFF's Educational Articles

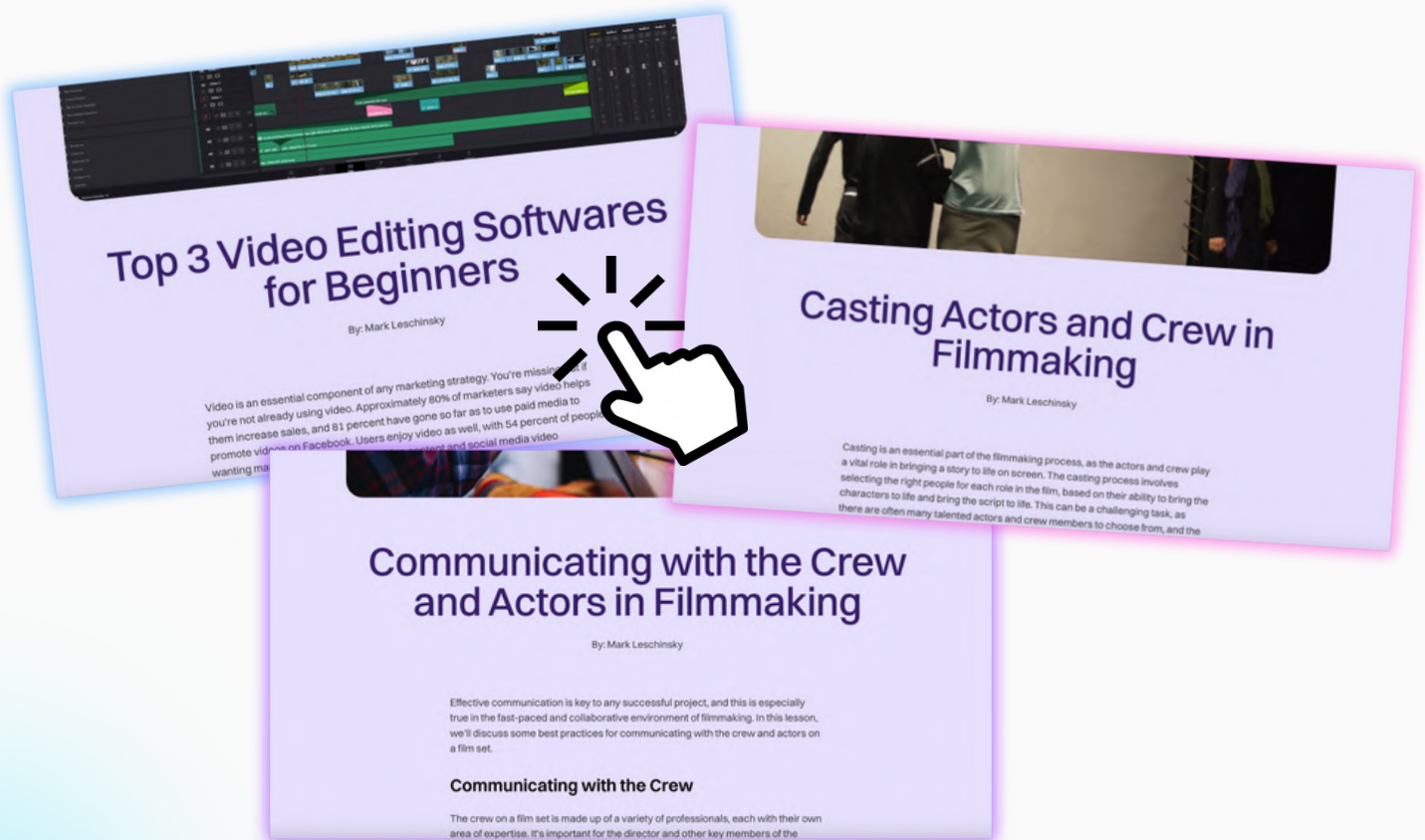
SWIFF is a guiding light for online learners, curating enriching educational articles on [swift.org](http://swift.org). Committed to nurturing emerging filmmakers, we offer free educational resources, igniting creative growth and enabling aspiring artists to embark on their filmmaking journeys with confidence.

 **357,848**

Learners have accessed  
our articles for free

 **161**

Countries represent  
learners on our website



# SWIFF's Film Sessions Podcast

SWIFF hosts the Film Sessions Podcast—a stage where the captivating personal stories of SWIFF filmmakers shine bright. Through intimate conversations, we amplify their inspiring journeys, providing them with online visibility and celebrating the diverse tapestry of voices that shape the world of film.

 **577**

Total episodes published

 **7,733**

Worldwide streams of the podcast

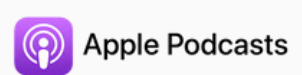
 **12**

Seasons of podcast episodes

 **23**

Inspiring podcast hosts

Published on:



Featured podcast hosts:



Lexi Casida



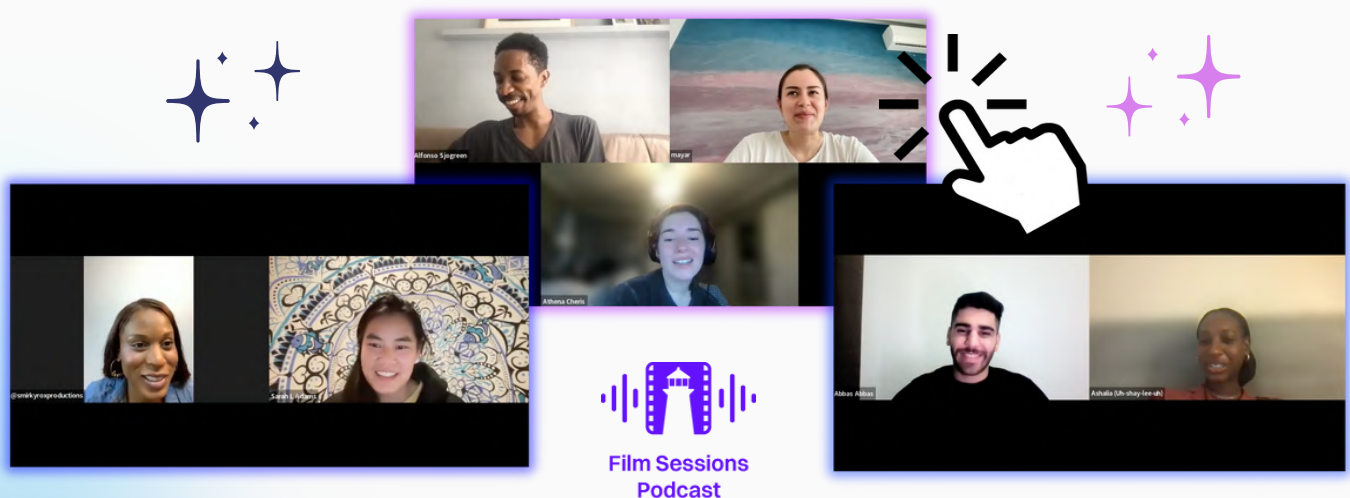
Alfred Johnson



Mark Leschinsky



Tanvi Palavalas





# SWIFF's Published Children's Book

Kindling the creative spark in young filmmakers, Mark authored and illustrated "Beanie the Bunny Teaches Children About Filmmaking." Guided by his charming pet bunny, Beanie, young readers embark on a cinematic journey in this 30-page picture book. Beanie teaches children foundational storytelling, filming, and editing skills using accessible resources found at home.

 **821**

Free digital copies distributed to young SWIFF students

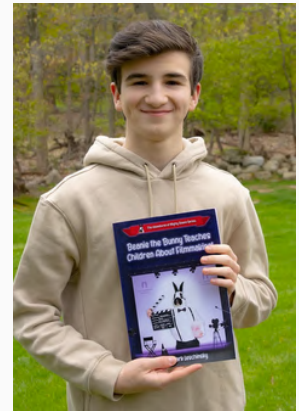
 **20**

Free physical copies distributed at in-person book reading & signing



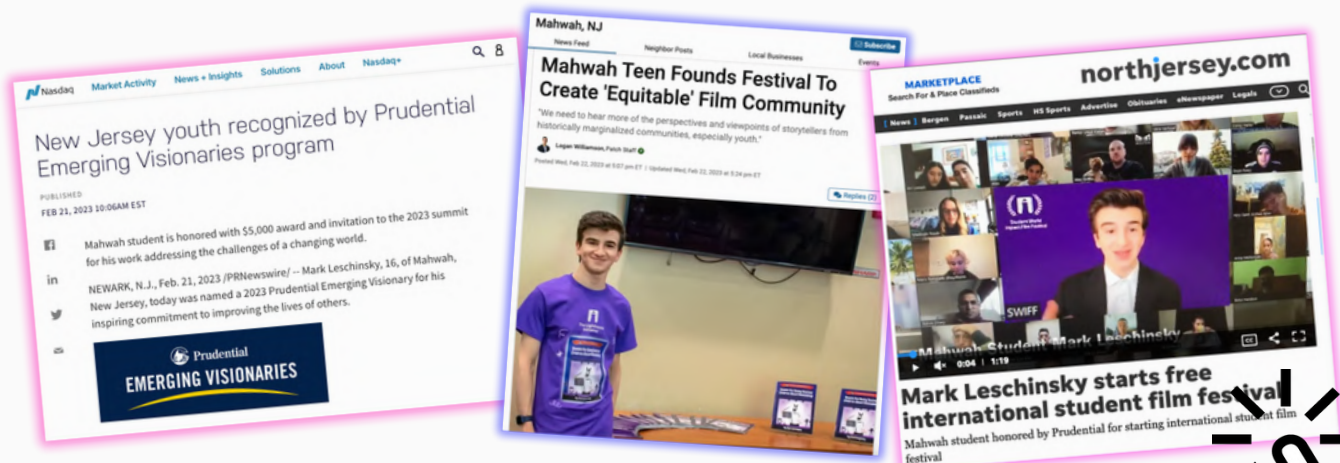
## Mark's Free Book Reading & Signing

Hosted at the Mahwah Public Library in New Jersey in 2022.



# Impactful Media Coverage

SWIFF's mission and impact have garnered media coverage across the United States and in Times Square, bringing awareness to its initiatives.



## Times Square Billboard

SWIFF's Founder, Mark, was showcased on the Times Square Billboard by Prudential as 1 of 25 inspiring national changemakers (April 23, 2023)



## News in the United States:

**Bloomberg**  **Nasdaq**

**88.3fm WBG.org** **yahoo! finance**

**NJ PBS** **News channel 8**



# Recognition

## British Royal Family's Diana Award

In 2023, SWIFF's Founder, Mark, received the Diana Award from the British Royal Family for dedication to community service. From their website: "Established in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, The Diana Award is the most prestigious accolade a young person aged 9-25 years can receive for their social action or humanitarian work."



### Utilizing this recognition to increase impact:

SWIFF aims to harness this recognition as a catalyst for extending its impact to BIPOC students in the United Kingdom, a community that the Diana Award serves.

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## Bill of Rights Institute's MyImpact Challenge

In 2023, SWIFF received the 2nd Prize at the MyImpact Challenge, the Bill of Rights Institute's National Civics Contest, for its global impact.



### Utilizing this recognition to increase impact:

SWIFF aims to utilize its newfound connections with the Bill of Rights Institute, hoping to extend its impact and empower a broader spectrum of students across the US, enabling them to harness their voices as catalysts for positive change.



# Recognition

## New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy

In a significant milestone of engagement in 2023, Mark engaged in a one-on-one phone call with Governor Phil Murphy of the State of New Jersey, sharing SWIFF's local impact and aspirations.



### Utilizing this recognition to increase impact:

Through this exchange, Mark had the privilege to explore SWIFF's role in helping New Jersey's youth. SWIFF is optimistic about the potential of this newfound connection, aiming to forge a meaningful partnership with the NJ Motion Picture & Television Commission, thereby reaching more young filmmakers in the State.

### Governor Murphy's Letter



# Recognition

## Prudential Emerging Visionaries

In 2023, SWIFF received recognition from the Prudential Emerging Visionaries program as 1 of 25 inspiring national change-making initiatives.



### Utilizing this recognition to increase impact:

In April 2023, Mark attended the Changemaker Summit at Prudential on a mission to enhance SWIFF's impact. Engaging with fellow peers, Mark participated in skill-building workshops that focused on youth agency in change-making.



# Future Goals

Since its inception in May 2022, the Student World Impact Film Festival has embarked on a year-long journey of growth. SWIFF's vision is to create a future where every young artist flourishes through an inclusive platform for showcasing their craft. Guided by this purpose, SWIFF aims to grow through the following avenues:



## Expand Partnership with Amazon Prime Video

SWIFF has successfully distributed one film through its partnership with Prime Video. To empower more young storytellers with a global platform, SWIFF aims to distribute an additional ten films during the 2023-24 term.



## Host SWIFF 2024

SWIFF hosted its inaugural festival in November 2022, showcasing over 3,000 films. Building on that success, SWIFF 2023 (June 2023) showcased over 13,000 films. SWIFF plans to host its third season in 2024 with 15,000 films.



## Partner with the United States White House

Guided by its founding principle of 'dreaming big,' SWIFF's inception defied expectations. From a newly-formed student-led festival, it evolved into a global force, impacting over 12,100 young artists. In 2024 and 2025, SWIFF aims to 'dream big' by partnering with the United States White House. SWIFF hopes to help reinstate the White House Student Film Festival (hosted in 2014, 2015, and 2016) to spotlight the vibrant voices of America's youth.



# Acknowledgments

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the remarkable individuals and passionate contributors who have propelled the Student World Impact Film Festival's journey of impact. We wish a special thank you to SWIFF's international network of volunteers and student film judges who dedicate their time to social impact. Your continued support, dedication, and collaboration have been the driving force behind our endeavors.

Together, we have cultivated a vibrant community of storytellers, learners, and changemakers, united in our shared commitment to amplifying diverse voices and igniting positive change through the art of filmmaking. As we reflect on the milestones achieved and the pathways ahead with SWIFF 2024, we extend our deepest gratitude for standing alongside us in our mission.



# Thank you!

If you have any questions or would like to discuss a part of this report, please feel free to reach out to us.

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🖱 [www.swiff.org](http://www.swiff.org)