

THE NEW YORKER
DOCUMENTARY



HOLDING MOSES Press Kit

TRT 17 minutes

US 2022 - English

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*****Academy Award qualified & IDA Shortlisted in the Short Documentary category*****

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LOGLINE

A Broadway performer becomes a mother, braiding rhythm and grief and time and joy on her path to connect with her profoundly disabled son.

SYNOPSIS

Randi studied Butoh dance in Japan before performing in the show STOMP, forging a deep connection with movement and her body. Randi is visually striking, with close-cropped salt and pepper hair, and presents as very masculine of center, defying most people's image of a mother. Birthing her son felt triumphant, then confusing as he was whisked away to the NICU. When doctors shared that Moses was profoundly disabled and faced a tenuous future, Randi fell into a well of grief before unearthing a new language by which to learn and love her son – one born and honed in the body.

Randi's story laces together family, queerness and disability with vulnerability. Hers is a parenting journey we rarely speak openly about in our culture. We made this project over the last year with generous feedback from parents of disabled children, the disabled adult community, queer families, and fellow filmmakers. The film has partnered and screened with the Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation, Moebius Syndrome Foundation, AGENDA, and several other disability groups. We've found that audiences are excited to celebrate queer family and that the film resonates broadly with parents of non-disabled children as well. HOLDING MOSES illuminates the often invisible story of the caregiver and sparks conversations that help shift a shame narrative around the stunning challenges and surprising gifts that come with the birth of a disabled child.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

HOLDING MOSES is especially intimate for me – our main character Randi and I are romantic partners and Moses is her son. In the throes of my own deep grief experience, Randi and I recorded the story of how she reckoned with her grief around birthing Moses. Randi shared with a fierce honesty which became the audio track for this film. The intimacy you're hearing is a mother revealing her rawest self to her partner.

Jen and I brought the radio edit to our collaborators and started filming. I bartered services with our cinematographer Clare Major and filmed over the next 16 months because the passage of time and the changing seasons were essential ingredients to bring us into Randi's internal emotional experience. An unexpected hail storm swept through Marin in late January on my birthday, giving us the gift we needed to finish the film. We connected with my old friend Greg O'Toole who edited over nights and weekends to help assemble our rough cut.

We shared the film with stakeholders to help us understand the way it was landing – especially in its rawest moments around what we came to call “the terrible truth” where Randi speaks of a fleeting, heart-wrenching wish for her son. Randi is not the first parent to have this thought, and she will not be the last. We struggled around including those words, then landed in the understanding that by naming and owning her truth fully, she could help dispel the shame narrative which deepened her capacity to love her child. Feedback screenings of the film with a range of audiences have helped us understand the healing available in sharing Randi’s parenting journey. I hold immense respect and gratitude to Randi sharing this story and to our team for holding space for us to tell it together.

KEY TEAM

Frankly Speaking Films was founded in 2020 by Oakland-based queer activist filmmakers Jen Rainin and Rivkah Beth Medow, whose first collaboration on the feature documentary AHEAD OF THE CURVE served as a model on which the company was built. Frankly Speaking Films exists to tell mesmerizing stories about strong queer women and non-binary people. The team created the award-winning short documentary HOLDING MOSES, and executive produced JEANNETTE (In Festivals), a feature documentary about a survivor of the Pulse nightclub massacre.



Director: Rivkah Beth Medow is a Sundance x WIF and Film Independent fellow whose documentary feature credits include AHEAD OF THE CURVE

(Co-Director/Producer: STARZ); HUMMINGBIRDS (Co-Producer: in post); BEING GEORGE CLOONEY (Producer: Netflix); and SONS OF A GUN (Director/Producer: PBS).



Co-Director/Producer: Jen Rainin is a Film Independent fellow whose credits include HOMEROOM (EP: Hulu); TWO SPIRITS (EP: Independent Lens); and SHIT &

CHAMPAGNE (EP: Hulu). AHEAD OF THE CURVE (Director: STARZ) was Jen’s directorial debut.



Featured Cast: Randi Rader is a mother and a dancer who lives with her three children in Marin. She works as a trademark attorney for a leading international law firm. Randi cares deeply about people, relationships, and community. She seeks understanding and her training in Non-Violent Communication deepens her empathetic connections, helping her make observations instead of judgements.



Cinematographer: Clare Major is a cinematographer and documentary filmmaker who specializes in handheld observational camerawork, beautifully lit interviews, and rich scene coverage. She is passionate about stories that illuminate the intersection of cultures and the lives of women and girls. Credits include THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPER (Sheffield 2022); BELLY OF THE BEAST (Human Rights Watch Film Festival 2020); AHEAD OF THE CURVE (Frameline 2020); and WE ARE THE RADICAL MONARCHS (SXSW 2019). In 2020, Clare was named as one of DOC NYC's

"40 Under 40" filmmakers to watch.



Editor: Greg O'Toole is an Emmy-winning documentary film editor and writer whose feature documentaries have screened at festivals around the world, broadcasting on PBS, the BBC, ESPN, FOX, Netflix, and other outlets. Since 2011, he has been nominated for eight National Emmys, including for Best Editing and Best Documentary. His work includes the Emmy-winning AFTER TILLER, the three-time Emmy-nominated BETTER THIS WORLD (winner of the WGA award for Best Documentary Screenplay), the Emmy-nominated and Tribeca Audience Award-winning

THE RETURN, the Emmy-nominated TWO ESCOBARS, the Emmy-nominated SHOT IN THE DARK, the Emmy-nominated VEGAS BABY, the Cinema Eye-nominated AN HONEST LIAR, the Sundance award-winning THE PRICE OF FREE, and the Sundance opening night film, MISS AMERICANA.

FESTIVALS

SFFILM Festival 2022 - **Winner** - Golden Gate Award (Academy Award qualified)

Riverrun Film Festival 2022 - **Winner** - Best Short Documentary - Honorable Mention

Provincetown Film Festival 2022 - **Winner** - Best Short Documentary (Academy Award qualified)

Frameline46 2022 - **Winner** - Best Short Documentary (BAFTA qualified)

Outfest 2022 - Official Selection

SF Jewish Film Festival 2022 - **Winner** - Best Short Documentary (Academy Award qualified)

Traverse City 2022 - Official Selection

Tallgrass Film Festival 2022 - Official Selection

Seattle Queer Film Festival 2022 - Official Selection

Hawai'i International Film Festival 2022 - Official Selection

Q-Doc Portland 2022 - Official Selection

High-resolution images for the film can be found [here](#).

Film trailer can be found [here](#).

Praise for HOLDING MOSES from Festival & Disability Organizations

[‘Holding Moses’ Trailer: The New Yorker’s Oscar-Contending Short Doc Reveals Dancer’s Journey Of Love With Her Disabled Son](#) - Matthew Carey, *Deadline*

“An intimate journey with Broadway dancer Randi Rader as she reveals the emotional challenges of raising her young son Moses, who was born with a profound disability. The 16-minute documentary, directed by Rivkah Beth Medow and co-directed by Jen Rainin, features stunning visuals and Rader’s remarkably candid account of her experience.”

- Matthew Carey, *Deadline*

“Holding Moses is a lyrical and artfully-made film that explores the complexities of being an artist, a parent and a human. Embracing the movement and physicality of its dancer protagonist, Randi, this powerful film allows viewers to share a brutally honest and emotionally profound journey of motherhood.”

- San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, **Winner – Best Short Documentary**

“An incredible piece of filmmaking with beautifully intimate cinematography and striking sound design. Holding Moses is a love letter that exposes the vulnerability of the story and the truthfulness of the struggle.”

- Frameline Film Festival, **Winner – Best Short Documentary**

“Honest and vulnerable. A fantastic way to explore parenting and the act of patience.”

- SFFILM Festival, **Winner – Golden Gate Award**

“Courageous in its honesty and joy. Exquisitely filmed and deeply engaging.”

- Provincetown International Film Festival, **Winner – Best Short Documentary**

“Incredibly raw and beautiful. This film is a gift.”

- Ronni Blumenthal CEO, Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation

“Thank you for telling this story – for all that it means for our disability community. And for all the other people who will learn and grow in compassion for having seen this film. This film is truly beautiful. I was moved by Randi’s articulation and images of her falling deeply in love with her son Moses, moving from devastating disappointment to a place of limitless love. Seeing and feeling their shared love up on the screen was such a gift. I hope the film is able to reach a broad audience as there are countless ways so many people will benefit.”

- Geri Justi, Infant Parent Psychotherapist Children’s Hospital Oakland

“At the recent Moebius Syndrome Foundation National Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia, our attendees were enriched by viewing the beautifully written and directed short film, Holding Moses. This screening generated a heartfelt and impactful discussion from parents who could relate to some of the raw emotions expressed in the film, and others who although not a parent to a child with severe disabilities, were moved by gaining better insight into the immense emotional and physical challenges that a parent can go through when they are raising a child who has serious medical conditions.

If everyone were to take a few moments and watch this film, we believe the world would be filled with greater compassion, a realization that people with disabilities have incredible gifts to offer, and a better understanding that love and joy can come out of difficult situations. We are grateful that Randi was willing to share part of her journey in such an honest manner, and to Frankly Speaking Films for taking this special story and turning it into a powerful work of art that has the ability to change lives.”

- Jenny Whitman, Executive Director, Moebius Syndrome Foundation

“This touching short film resonates with the range of feelings that parents of a child with a rare disease can have, including the love and honor and even challenges and fears. Watching the experience that Randi has will help even those without a disability in the family to better understand the unique journey they are on.”

- Alysia Halladay, Chief Science Officer, Autism Science Foundation and Program Manager for the Alliance for Genetic Etiologies in Neurodevelopmental Disorders and Autism (AGENDA)