

# 2009/10 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships Lippincott Award

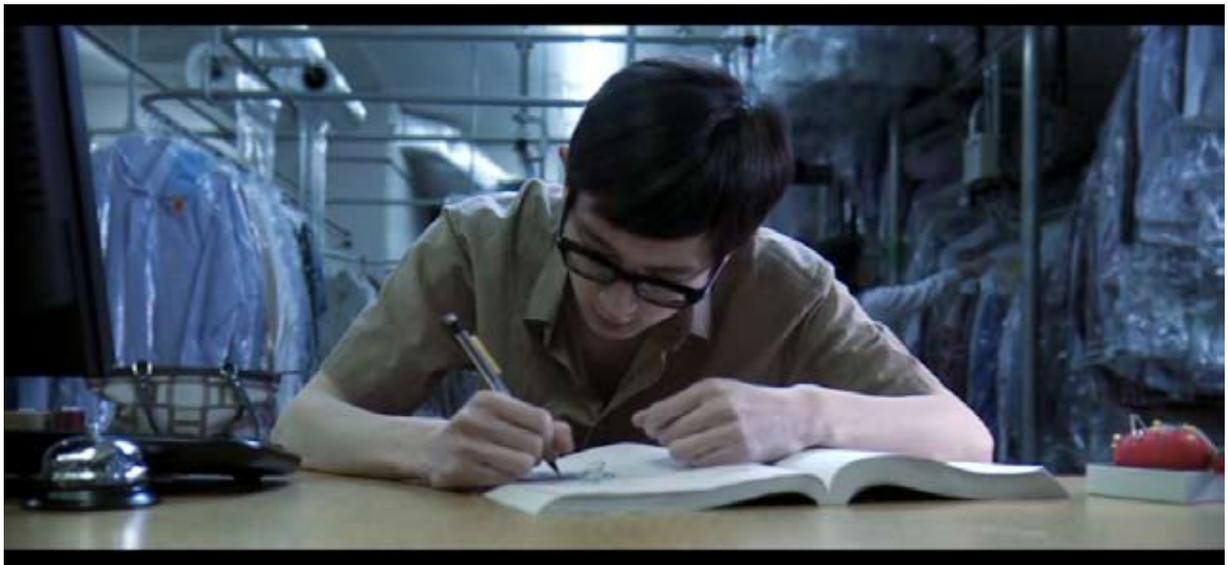


**CHRISTINA CHOE**

Film  
Graduate student  
Columbia University

Growing up as the only Korean American in an isolated suburb in New Jersey, I always knew I was the outsider. Perhaps that's why I've always been drawn to outsiders and their stories. After returning from a semester abroad in Kenya, I became passionate about making documentaries about people living on the margins. During my last year of college, I made an experimental documentary about migration and globalization called "Turmeric Border-Marks." I spent two months in Korea, interviewing illegal migrant workers from Southeast Asia. A couple years later, I traveled to Senegal to make another documentary called "United Nations of Hip Hop." I spent two months in Senegal interviewing rappers who were part of a hip-hop movement so influential, that during the presidential elections of 2001, many of the rappers convinced the general public to vote in opposition of a dictatorship regime. The film follows the lives of these rappers who use hip-hop as a vehicle, to talk about social issues affecting them, such as African debt dependency, Islam and urban poverty.

In the past, I have used documentary film to express other peoples' stories. A few years ago I transitioned into narrative film and started writing my first feature-



**Worldstudio**  
FOUNDATION



*the professional association for design*

## CHRISTINA CHOE

Film

length screenplay called "Guess Who's Coming for Kimchee." The script was inspired by the moment when I told my mom that my boyfriend was black and the three years I kept it a secret. The film deals with cultural taboos of interracial relationships within Korean society against the backdrop of Confucianism, hip hop culture, and performance art.

Since starting my first year at Columbia University's graduate film program, I have learned an immense amount about writing and directing. At the end of my first semester, I directed, produced and edited my first narrative short film. "The Queen" is about Bobby, a Korean-American teenage outcast, who is working at his parents dry cleaners on prom weekend. When the prom queen and her boyfriend stop by with their dress and tuxedo, Bobby has his own prom to remember. In the film, Bobby experiences a sexual awakening, as he fantasizes about dancing with the prom queen's boyfriend in the dry cleaners. While writing the film, I imagined a throwback to an 80s John Hughes movie with a twist, this time from the point of view of a closeted gay Korean-American outcast who is invisible at his high school. This experience of directing actors and my own script for the first time was truly the most exhilarating rush I've ever experienced, even as a documentary filmmaker. To arrive on set, with a cinematographer, production designer, cast and crew all there to collaborate and achieve my vision, was the most amazing experience. Had I not had received training and feedback from peers and professors at Columbia, I don't think I could have pulled off the film in such a way.

My first year at Columbia has been an eye-opening experience as a new director, but has also challenged me as a screenwriter. I'm currently working on new screenplay, a post-apocalyptic sci-fi adventure film about the endangerment of our food supply, the ethics of genetic engineering, and a seed bank. In the script, a young woman discovers her mission to save an agricultural Noah's ark, and embarks on a dangerous quest to save humanity. It's my hope that with the help of a Worldstudio AIGA Scholarship I can continue to learn and grow as a filmmaker. Whether it's using sci-fi, comedy or hip-hop in my films, my aim is to leave a social footprint.

