

## Aronson Fellowship Reflection

Being a fellow in the Aronson Fellowship was a really great experience for me. Through the fellowship I was able to start workshopping and brainstorm a really broad idea into a more concise project. When starting the fellowship I knew I wanted to create a documentary that centered food within this web of intersecting struggles and resistance. I was not completely sure at the start of how I was going to portray this complex topic, but I had the hope that the fellowship would guide me into developing my idea and start filming the project. What truly helped was reviewing and analyzing the Jemez principles. I knew I wanted to create a film for community members who are directly impacted by climate and environmental injustices. I wanted the film to reflect a lot of the climatic changes that have been impacting marginalized communities and how they've been resisting in different forms, whether it be micro or macro. More than anything, I wanted the documentary to reflect the experiences that members from my community and I were experiencing. Through our collective lived experiences, a lot can be drawn to show macro and micro impacts on our community. After having conversations with my mentor, several folks from the fellowship, friends, family, and other community members, I was able to narrow my concept to a more concrete idea. I was to create a documentary on the impacts of transnational food policies on the Puebla, Mexico and New York City transnational community. The idea sprouted from the notion that New York City doesn't have any "good" Mexican food, but when you examine the concept closer you begin to realize it is the policies that are in place that have led to this notion. On top of that, after having conversations with family members, who are campesinos in Mexico, about their thoughts and reflections on climatic changes, it was obvious that they were very much well aware and being directly impacted by them. This was not much of a surprise, but despite knowing that using industrial agricultural practices is harmful to the environment and to the land you were not able to use traditional or agroecological practices because of economic barriers. This is something that stood out to me and was crucial to me to highlight in the documentary for it shows how directly impacted communities, especially those who cultivate and grow our food, know of the harms of using industrial agriculture but are left with very limiting and restricting options on how and what to cultivate. Despite this occurrence happening in a different country, it still has really strong impacts on communities in NYC. As industrial agriculture grows and threatens native plants and foods, it also starts to become a threat of cultural erasure. It was all of these different topics that really shaped the framework of this documentary. Also the fact that a vital presidential election was occurring in Mexico and one of the biggest topics of conversation was policies around access to water. With the help of the fellowship, I was able to map out how to go about the filming. I was able to go to Mexico and interview family members about conversations we have had in the past and learn more about what was occurring. I was able to collaborate and co-direct the project with a friend of mine who has far more experience in documentary filmmaking, specifically on the sonidero scene within the Puebla-New York transnational community. She is also an organizer with Workers Movement Liberation based in Brooklyn. We were able to conduct interviews with family members and friends here in New York City about their lived experiences. Although the project is not yet completed, we have been able to review the work that we have conducted as of now and pinpoint the next steps to be completed to create a well rounded documentary. It was truly helpful receiving feedback from folks in the fellowship to help name a few the next steps to be completed. My co-director and I hope to share the completed project within the near future.