

LEITIS IN WAITING

a feature documentary by Dean Hamer, Joe Wilson & Kumu Hina Wong-Kalu

TAGLINE

Leitis in Waiting is a raw yet tender portrait of Joey Mataele and the Tonga leitis, an intrepid group of native transgender women fighting a rising tide of religious fundamentalism and intolerance in their South Pacific Kingdom.

MEDIUM SYNOPSIS

Leitis in Waiting is the story of Joey Mataele and the Tonga leitis, an intrepid group of native transgender women fighting a rising tide of religious fundamentalism and intolerance in their South Pacific Kingdom. With unexpected humor and extraordinary access to the Kingdom's royals and religious leaders, this emotional journey reveals what it means to be different in a society ruled by tradition, and what it takes to be accepted without forsaking who you are.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Leitis in Waiting is the story of Joey Mataele and the Tonga leitis, an intrepid group of native transgender women fighting a rising tide of religious fundamentalism and intolerance in their South Pacific Kingdom.

The film follows Joey, a devout Catholic of noble descent, as she organizes an exuberant beauty pageant presided over by a princess, provides shelter and training for a young contestant rejected by her family, and spars with American-financed evangelicals threatening to resurrect colonial-era laws that criminalize the leitis' lives. With unexpected humor and extraordinary access to the Kingdom's royals and religious leaders, Joey's emotional journey reveals what it means to be different in a society ruled by tradition, and what it takes to be accepted without forsaking culture and tradition.

Leitis in Waiting is an inside story, created by a Polynesian transgender woman who once competed, and won the crown in, Joey's beauty pageant.

MEDIA QUOTE

Leitis in Waiting is a true gift to the world - mesmerizing and unflinching .

~Jeannette Hereniko, President, Network for the Promotion of Asian Pacific Cinema

SPECS & LINKS

SPECS

TRT: 71 min

Video: 1920x1800, color

Sound: Stereo, 5.1

Exhibition formats: DCP, Quicktime

WEBSITE

FACEBOOK

CONTACTS

Dean Hamer | Joe Wilson

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CAST & CREW

Featured Participants

JOEY JOLEEN MATAELE
EVA BARON
PRINCESS SALOTE LUPEPAU'U TUITA-TAIONE
PASTOR BARRY TAUKOLO

Produced and Directed by

DEAN HAMER
JOE WILSON

Story Creator and Producer

HINALEIMOANA WONG-KALU

Editor

BILL WEBER

Original Compositions by

JOEL DOUEK

Sound Design

PHIL PERKINS

Color

GARY COATES

Producer

ILAISAANE SISI'UNO HELU

Advisors

TEVITA'O KA'ILI
FUIFUILUPE NIUMEITOLU

BIOS

Joey “Joleen” Mataele, protagonist

Joey Mataele is a leader in the LGBTQI and human rights movements in the Pacific. She co-founded and currently chairs the Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network, is the Pacific Island Representative for the International Gay and Lesbian Association, and Chairperson of the South Pacific MSM Network Group. She co-founded the Tonga Leiti's Association in 1992, and developed the Miss Galaxy Pageant as an annual event to support it. Joey is also a talented singer and entertainer who understands the importance of oral tradition and the role of song, humour and dance in Pacific cultures.

Dean Hamer, Producer/Director

Dean Hamer is an Emmy Award winning filmmaker and New York Times Book of the Year author with a long history in communicating complex and controversial ideas to diverse publics. He formed Qwaves with partner Joe Wilson to make documentaries that emanate from the voices of those on the outside, that inspire creativity, that incite us to abandon our comfortable role as spectators and compel us to question and to act. Their work, which has been supported by Sundance, PBS, Pacific Islanders in Communications and the Ford Foundation, has won awards at film festivals around the world and used by a wide range of schools and community organizations.

Hamer and Wilson are currently working on a series of films about Pacific Islander voices, history and culture. Their feature KUMU HINA, about Native Hawaiian transgender cultural icon Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, won the Audience Award for its national PBS broadcast on *Independent lens* and received the GLAAD Media Award for outstanding documentary. The accompanying kid-friendly educational film, A PLACE IN THE MIDDLE, had its international premiere at the Berlinale and was nominated for a Teddy Award. The film and accompanying educational toolkit are at the center of a strength-based education and outreach campaign for gender diversity and inclusion. Hamer is also the author of several best selling nonfiction books and a sought-after lecturer and frequent guest on TV documentaries and news shows including Nightline and Oprah. He lives on the north shore of O'ahu and is actively involved in local community affairs and education.

Joe Wilson, Producer/Director

Joe Wilson got involved in documentary filmmaking following a career in international development and human rights. Frustrated by the limitations of traditional organizing and advocacy, he picked up a camera with hopes of reaching broader audiences with stories that would inform and compel people to act. His short films with partner Dean Hamer were part of the pioneering days of citizen-generated content on the Internet and cable television, and have been used as outreach and advocacy tools by a wide range of community and educational organizations.

In 2004, Wilson returned to his small hometown of Oil City, Pennsylvania, to direct and produce the Emmy Award-winning feature documentary OUT IN THE SILENCE, which premiered in the Human Rights Watch Film Festival in New York to great critical acclaim. Through national PBS broadcast and more than 1,000 grassroots screenings across America, this film has become part of a national movement to open dialogue, counter school bullying, and support fairness and equality for all in small towns and rural communities. Wilson and Hamer currently live in Hawai'i where they are working on films about Pacific Island life, history and culture and the lessons they hold for contemporary society.

Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, Story Creator/Producer

Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu is a Native Hawaiian teacher, story teller and community leader. She was a founder of the Kulia Na Mamo transgender health project, cultural director of a Hawaiian public charter school, and candidate for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, one of the first transgender candidates for statewide political office in the United States. She is currently the Chair of the O'ahu Island Burial Council, which oversees the management of Native Hawaiian burial sites and ancestral remains. Kumu Hina's work has brought national attention to the Native Hawaiian embrace of māhū, those who embody both male and female spirit, and the true meaning of aloha – love, honor and respect for all.

Kumu Hina has been the subject of two feature documentaries, KE KULANA HE MAHU (2001) and KUMU HINA (2014). Her first production credit was as story creator for the short educational video A PLACE IN THE MIDDLE, for which she is also the outreach campaign spokesperson and educational advisor. She has also worked as a cultural advisor for several film and television programs about the Pacific Islands.

Bill Weber, Editor

Bill Weber is an acclaimed documentary editor with a special talent for weaving serious stories with humorous and entertaining elements. He cut his editing teeth with a broadcast Emmy, an MTV Music Video of the Year Award, and a successful career in commercial work. He discovered his talent and love for documentaries by editing and directing THE COCKETTES, which premiered at Sundance and the Berlin International Film Festivals and won the LA Film Critics Documentary of the Year. He also edited and co-directed the Sundance, Berlin and *Independent Lens* feature WE WERE HERE: THE AIDS YEARS IN SAN FRANCISCO, of which the New York Times said, "Of all the cinematic explorations of the AIDS crisis, not one is more heartbreaking and inspiring than WE WERE HERE - an extraordinarily moving, beautifully edited documentary."

Weber's additional editing credits include THE GALAPAGOS AFFAIR (Berlin 2014); Feelings are Facts: The Life of Yvonne Rainer (Berlin 2015); TO BE TAKEI, which follows the life and times of George Takei (Sundance 2014); the Academy Award nominated documentary THE FINAL INCH; the Emmy nominated films LAST LETTER HOME and ALZHEIMER'S CAREGIVERS for HBO; the Telluride premiering documentary feature HATS OFF; and numerous specials for HBO and The History Channel.

FILMOGRAPHY

Dean Hamer and Joe Wilson

A PLACE IN THE MIDDLE (2015)
KUMU HINA (2014)
OUT IN THE SILENCE (2011)
BOY IN A DRESS (2010)
THORN IN YOUR SIDE (2008)
WE BELONG (2006)
OTROS AMORES (2006)
THE PREACHER AND THE POET (2006)
THAT'S UNFORTUNATE (2005)
JOY RIDE (2006)
FAVELA SURF DREAMS (2005)

Bill Weber

THE UNTOLD TALES OF ARMISTEAD MAUPIN (2017)
A REVOLUTION IN FOUR SEASONS (2016)
DESERT MIGRATION (2015)
HAVANA CURVEBALL (2014)
FEELINGS ARE FACTS: THE LIFE OF YVONNE RAINER (2014)
TO BE TAKEI (2013)
THE GALAPAGOS AFFAIR: SATAN CAME TO EDEN (2012)
WE WERE HERE (2011)
SEX IN 69: THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION IN AMERICA (2009)
THE ALZHEIMER'S PROJECT – CAREGIVERS (2008)
THE FINAL INCH (2008)
HATS OFF (2007)
INTO THE FIRE (2006)
GOLD RUSH (2005)
BLOOD SWEAT AND GLITTER (2005)
LAST LETTERS HOME (2004)
THE COCKETTES (2002)