

## **Mawtini (My Homeland) a film by Fateema Al-Hamaydeh Miller**

**Tagline:** Land Back from Turtle Island to Palestine.

**Logline:** Nawal, a young grieving Palestinian woman, forms an unlikely friendship with Tanya, an older Indigenous woman, becoming an accomplice to her guerilla gardening on the lawn of their apartment building. Together they battle with middle management to make it to harvest.

**Short Synopsis:** Grieving the loss of her grandmother, Nawal fixates on keeping a fig sapling alive, her last remaining connection to Palestine. When she meets Tanya, an older Indigenous woman and the resident trouble-maker in her new apartment building, she learns what resilience and connection to the land under colonialism and capitalism really means.

### **CAST:**



#### ***Nawal played by Rena Dine***

Rena Dine is a Lebanese-Canadian actor who found a love for performing arts at a very young age. She has studied performance in both Alberta and BC, recently graduating from the prestigious Acting for Film & Television Program at Vancouver Film School. She is currently based in Vancouver, BC and proudly represented by HectiQ Artists Agency.



#### ***Tanya played by Monique Mojica***

Monique's practice is rooted in land-based embodied performance and culturally specific Indigenous dramaturgies.

She is the co-editor of *Staging Coyote's Dream, vols. I & II and III*, and wrote *Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way: Mapping Embodied Indigenous Performance*, with Brenda Farnell.

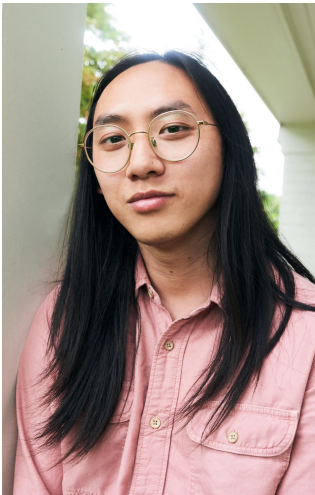
She is a member of the Indigenous Dramaturgy Circle at Tarragon Theatre and was the inaugural Wurlitzer Visiting Professor at the University of Victoria's Theatre Department in 2023.

**Writer/ Director- Fateema Al-Hamaydeh Miller**



Fateema is a Queer Palestinian/Canadian filmmaker whose work explores themes of fragmented identity, isolation and connection through "oh no, should I laugh?" comedy. She is passionate about creating nuanced representation of Arabs and Muslims for the screen and prioritizes making space for marginalized voices in front of and behind the camera. Her short film *EITR* was one of 8 world-wide recipients of the InsideOut RE:Focus Fund and the film had its world premier at OutFest LA. Fateema is a Women in the Director's Chair alumni and a current resident at the Canadian Film Centre Norman Jewison Directors' Lab. She believes deeply in resistance and resilience through laughter.

**Producer- Kevin Dong**



Kevin Dong is an independent producer based in Calgary, Alberta. He has produced works funded through Telefilm Canada, CBC, Canada Media Fund, and Canada Council for the Arts. Kevin is an alumnus of the Canadian Film Centre's Producer Lab and TIFF's Series Accelerator.

**Producer- Malachi Ellis**



Malachi Ellis is a Black Film and Television producer based in Toronto who strives to tell stories revolutionizing the status quo for BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ audiences. He was recently selected for the Reelworld Screen Institute's Producer Program and the Canadian Film Centre's Norman Jewison: Producer Lab. His producing skills have led him to work at some of the largest Canadian production companies, such as eOne and Bell Media. As an independent producer, Malachi has worked with some of Canada's most talented emerging writers/directors producing short films and proof-of-concept works. His most recent producing credits include *I LIVE HERE* (Aspen Shortsfest, CBC Gem), *DIASPORA* (TIFF 2022, Vimeo Staff Pick), *FISH BOY* (BFI Flare, Frameline47) and *EXPRESS* (TIFF 2023). In 2021, Malachi was named one of Playback Magazine's 10 to Watch. Malachi is an alumnus of Toronto Metropolitan University's RTA Media Production Program and the OYA Emerging Filmmakers Program.

### ***Cinematographer- Nick Haight***



Nick Haight is a cinematographer based in Toronto, Canada. He graduated from the image arts program at Ryerson University in 2013 and since then has worked on a large number of feature films, television shows, web series, short films, commercials and music videos including CBC's *Moonshine* and *Learn to Swim* which screened at TIFF in 2022.

### ***Ashley Devereux- Production Designer***



Ashley Devereux is a prolific Toronto based Production Designer. With over 10 years of experience in the industry and 6 years contributing to the DGC; Ashley, a delightful and excitable character, has demonstrated the vibrancy of her design eye. The key to her designs are in the tiny details. It's here she claims that you unlock the true vibe of any scene. Speaking of vibes, Ashley's artistic style is also demonstrated in her popular painting series "Fat Bottom Girls". In this series, Ashley showcases the bright and bold inner workings of her creative mind.

### ***Mariana Urrutia- Editor***



Mariana Urrutia is a creative and innovative Film Editor based in Toronto. She is dedicated to her craft, and approaches challenges with an open mind and a creative flair. She has distinguished herself in her field not only as a talented storyteller, but also as an enthusiastic and insightful collaborator.

## ***Amine Bouzaher- Composer***



Born in Algiers, Algeria, Amine is a classically trained multi-instrumentalist, composer, and producer who has lived in 6 different countries. From 2016-2021 he toured with Vancouver based I M U R, gracing major stages, winning national awards, and representing Music BC in India at 7 different showcases throughout the country. As a film composer, Amine's passion lies in telling untold stories, amplifying marginalized voices. He was recently selected to attend the prestigious Allan Slaight Music Residency and he envisions a lifetime dedicated to enriching the cinematic experience through his art.

**Medium Synopsis:** Nawal, a young Palestinian woman grieving the death of her grandmother & clinging to the task of keeping a fig sapling alive as her last thread of connection to Palestine, builds an unlikely friendship with Tanya, an older Indigenous woman growing a guerilla garden on the lawn of their apartment building. As Nawal helps Tanya with her garden & battle against middle management, the two women find home in their connection with each other on the margins.

**Long Synopsis:** Nawal, a young Palestinian woman moves into a new apartment building after the death of her grandmother. In her grief, she clings to keeping a fig tree alive that is a descendant of her family's fig tree in Palestine that was destroyed in the Nakba. There isn't enough light in her tiny apartment and the tree is slowly dying. Then, Nawal meets Tanya, an Indigenous woman who is a long term resident of the building and long term trouble maker, planting a guerilla garden on the patchy lawn of the apartment building. Nawal brings her fig tree outside in hopes it will thrive and helps Tanya grow her garden; they are both in different stages of grief and a budding friendship begins. All the while they battle the middle manager, a recent immigrant to Canada who is merely trying to play the game, keep his job and earn security and a stable home for his family. As the garden grows so do the threats from building management to the point where the garden is demolished. Nawal scrambles to rescue her fig tree and Tanya reveals that this happens every year. Every year she plants her garden and every year it is destroyed. Tanya helps Nawal learn to accept herself and let go of the symbol of the fig tree and to know that she is Palestinian enough whether it lives or dies. No one can take that away from her. The land will always be there to hold them and they will be there to hold each other.

**Director's Statement:** This film began as a reckoning with the question "*What does it mean to be from stolen land living on stolen land?*" as a Palestinian displaced and unable to return to my

ancestral homeland living on stolen Indigenous land in Canada. Inspired by the generosity and solidarity I feel between my community as a Palestinian and the community of Indigenous artists and activists I have been lucky to surround myself with, *Mawtini (My Homeland)* explores the different ways we can embody resistance under capitalist and colonial structures and the healing that can be found in connection to the land and each other.

#### **Director's Notes:**

- This script was developed with actor & dramaturg Monique Mojica who provided invaluable support & insight, helping to ground the project in Indigenous lived experience. Together we drew parallels & found the stories that connected us, informing both the writing & rehearsal process with Monique & Rena.
- This script was in development for two years before filming in October 2023. Seeing the world waking up to the violent colonization of Palestine that's been happening in real time for the past 75 years reminds us that this film is important now more than ever. *Mawtini (My Homeland)* is dedicated to the martyrs of Gaza.

#### **Production Notes:**

- We filmed *Mawtini (My Homeland)* over just two days in Toronto with a passionate & incredibly hard working cast & crew who volunteered their time to bring this project to life. Our lead Rena also flew in from Vancouver to be a part of this project.
- This is Rena Dine (Nawal)'s film debut!
- Monique Mojica is the mother of musician Ehren "Bear Witness" Thomas of *The Halluci Nation* and daughter of *Spider Woman Theatre* in New York, the longest running Indigenous Theatre Company in the United States.

#### **Character Descriptions:**

**Nawal-** A young Palestinian woman in her early 20s, now out on her own after the death of her grandmother, Nawal is grieving but trying to keep it all together. While trying to hold on to the fragments of her identity, Nawal is self conscious & isolated, craving a sense of safety & belonging.

**Tanya-** Tanya has reached a point in her life where she is very good at being alone. She is strong, grounded and doesn't take life too seriously because she knows how important it is. Tanya finds resistance in connection to the land under the constraints that city life presents. Her tough exterior protects a soft heart.

**Rodrigo-** A recent immigrant to Canada working hard to provide for his family, Rodrigo has totally sold out to the man in order to survive.

#### **Key Messages & Themes:**

Colonization, displacement, home, grief, chosen family, hope, housing, Indigenous resilience.

#### **Social Media Handles:**

**Instagram**

writer/director- @fateemasaurus  
production company- @khafeefdamproductions  
producers- @dong\_kohung @producedbymal  
cinematographer- @nhaight  
production designer- @ashley.dev.design  
editor- @mar.urr  
composer- @simplmachines  
nawal- @rena.dine  
tanya- @chocolatewomancollective  
canadian film centre- @cfccreates

**Production Company Logo:**



**Funders to be Credited:** The Canadian Film Centre, Panavision, Formosa, Picture Shop

**Stills:**



BTS:







