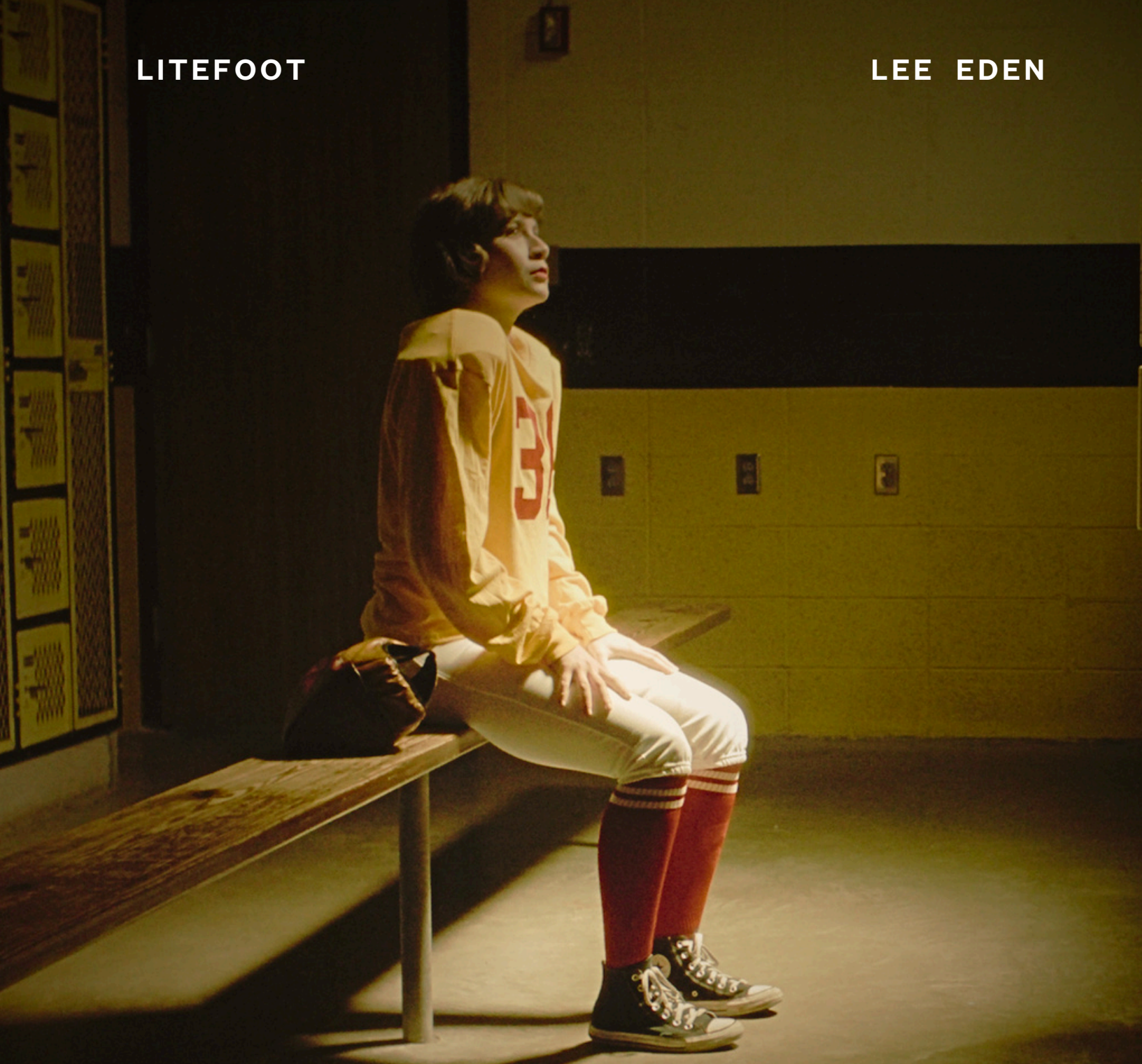


LITEFOOT

LEE EDEN



TOUGH ENOUGH

A film by Laura Somers

PRESS KIT

RUNNING TIME: 16 MIN | ASPECT RATIO: 1.85
SOUND: DOLBY 5.1 | COUNTRY: USA



Narrative Short Film

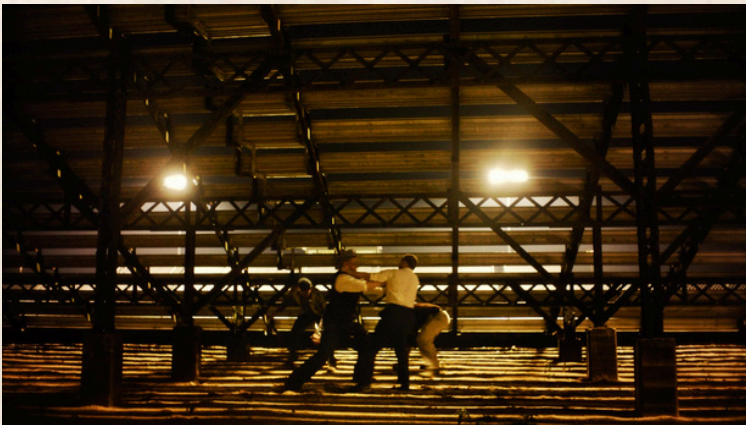
synopsis

TAG LINE

Defying the rules, defining history.

Inspired by a real story, in a 1947 Texas town, 'Tough Enough' follows the resilient, fictional character, Coach Chris Johnson, a Native American man, who challenges societal norms by allowing Frankie Groves, a determined teenage girl, to join the high school football team. As they navigate prejudice, internal strife, and a fight for respect, the film explores themes of gender equality, courage, and community, leaving an indelible mark on a small town's history.

PUBLICITY STILLS



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

What Makes This Project Unique & Its Societal Impact

Tough Enough aims to redefine conventional narratives, shedding light on untold stories while inspiring allyship and strength against enduring societal expectations. Set in 1940s Texas, the project breaks gender barriers within the world of high school football, offering a lens into the struggles of women and Native Americans at a pivotal moment in history.

This story goes beyond typical narratives of trauma, instead focusing on allyship and strength. It offers a poignant reminder that the battles for equality, understanding, and breaking societal expectations are ongoing, transcending time and history. By exploring these themes through a groundbreaking narrative lens, *Tough Enough* challenges historical norms and redefines the way we see gender, culture, and perseverance.

Personal Connection to the Material

I found the picture of Frankie Groves in her uniform in the locker room (see b&w still) on Facebook while I was researching for another football screenplay. It had been liked, shared, and commented on thousands of times by people who were in awe of a teenage girl playing football in the 1940s.

There are only two or three news articles that can be found today about her story - it's an important moment in women's history that disappeared with time. I was drawn towards the fact that Frankie's coach was the only Native American person in their community, and he was the one who was willing to stick his neck out to help Frankie achieve her dream.

The allyship between these two characters is particularly moving to me. They weren't trying to end up in the history books. It's these small, often unacknowledged actions — the everyday risks anyone can take — that push progress forward, even when they don't succeed. I wanted to acknowledge their courage through this film.

I grew up in Pasadena, Texas and I remember in high school, I wanted to be a Yell Leader on the football team — I wanted to be on the field with the football players. It was a job that historically went to males. After convincing the Coach that I could do just as good a job as the boys, he let me be the first female Yell Leader in the history of our high school.

The story of *Tough Enough* feels both timeless and urgently relevant, as it touches on universal themes of self-discovery, resilience, and the pursuit of equality. The film's recognition as a "Recommend" by The Script Lab on Coverfly, a finalist for the Roy W. Dean short film grant, and a semi-finalist for the Screencraft Short Film Fund competition, further validate the strength and relevance of the narrative.

Laura Somers (Writer & Director)



Laura Somers is a writer, director, editor, producer. Tired of waiting for permission to do what she always dreamed of--direct her own feature film--she raised funds on Seed & Spark and went back to her hometown of Houston, TX to make her feature directorial debut, **Rich Kids**. After Rich Kids **won 16 festival awards**, she struck a deal with Premiere Entertainment for worldwide sales. Her domestic distributor, ITN, **licensed the film to Netflix where it premiered in February 2020**—almost unheard of these days for a no-budget drama with unknown actors. Laura is originally from Texas and has lived in many pockets and communities around the country and **has a deep love of characters who are outcasts fighting for dignity**.

A creative visionary with a finger on the pulse of American consciousness and its youth, Laura is interested in telling stories that encourage viewers to create empathy for one another and advance humanity through creative storytelling by drawing characters who are strong, capable, independent, and thoughtful people who are fighting to have dignity in their lives and struggling with issues in today's society. **Much of her work is about subverting expectations and drawing stereotypes out of their boxes.**

As a director, she has been selected for fellowships and mentorships with **Women In Film, Film Independent, and SHOOT**, and her work has received financial support from **Banana Republic, Vanity Fair, IBM, UCLA, and the City of Austin**. Her productions have been highlighted in **American Theater Magazine, New York Magazine, Remezcla, Vanity Fair, The W Hotels and more**.

Laura has mentored screenwriters through the **WGA East Emerson Program, the Collyer Fellowship, and the Veteran's Writing Project/Wounded Warrior**, taught acting students at Austin Community College and was a programmer for the Anchorage International Film Festival between 2019-2021. She is a member of the **Alliance of Women Directors and Film Fatales**. She holds a **BFA in Theater Directing from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts** and is a **graduate of UCLA's Professional Screenwriting Program**. She grew up in Houston, TX, and currently lives in Los Angeles, CA with her husband and son.

v.c. rhone (Producer)



v.c. rhone (all lowercase) is a member of the **Alliance of Women Directors** and Founder of **A Two Hands Production** – an independent production company that presents faith-inspired stories that champion the underdog and blend historical events with a relatable, spiritual foundation.

v.c. writes, produces, and directs stories that embrace social scenes in a way that's provocative and entertaining; meeting audiences where they are and inspiring them to look inward.

v.c. co-wrote and produced **Not Afraid** - addressing the Murdered Missing Indigenous Women crisis, and receiving a **Best Producer nomination** and the **Indigenous Culture and Film Award at the Windrider Summit & Sundance Film Festival Experience in Park City, UT**.

v.c. is an **NBC TV Writers Semifinalist and a ScreenCraft Finalist**. Her screenplay, **Becky Brennen's Bangin' Bat Mitzvah**, debuted in the **top 5% on Coverfly**.

She completed her undergraduate studies at **NYU's Tisch School of the Arts** where she studied under **Academy Award Winner, Carol Dysinger**.

She completed her undergraduate studies in Film and Television Production at **New York University's Tisch School of the Arts** where she studied under **Academy Award Winner, Carol Dysinger (*Learning to Skateboard in a Warzone If You're a Girl*)**. She was previously mentored by **Emmy-nominated Karissa Valencia (Creator and Showrunner of Netflix's Emmy-Nominated, *Spirit Rangers*)**.

v.c. believes strongly in community service. She is a former **mayor-appointed city official in the City of Huntington Beach** and **worked with the Huntington Beach Police Department to improve human relations**.

v.c. received a **letter of commendation from President Barack Obama** for the work she does helping domestic abuse survivors and children transition to safety.

She has been featured in the Los Angeles Times and the OC Register for her dedication to using the arts as a bridge to promote human dignity.

Gary “Litefoot” Davis (Coach Johnson & Executive Producer)



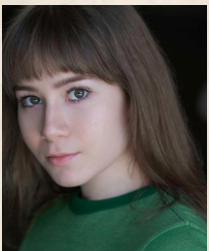
Litefoot (Gary Paul Davis) is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and also of Chichimeca descent. He’s widely recognized as one of the first Native American hip-hop artists to gain national attention, using his music to inspire Indigenous youth and promote cultural pride. His artistic name “Litefoot” reflects his commitment to walking lightly and respectfully on the earth – a principle grounded in Indigenous values of balance, humility, and connection to community.

Beyond music, Litefoot has built a multifaceted career as an actor, motivational speaker, and community leader. He’s appeared in films such as *The Indian in the Cupboard*, *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*, and *Adaptation*, often portraying characters that challenge stereotypes about Native people. His performances are deeply informed by his heritage and his lived experience as a Native man navigating both traditional and contemporary worlds.

Litefoot has also served as the Executive Director of the Native American Financial Services Association (NAFSA) and as Vice President of Native Affairs for the NCAIED (National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development), advancing economic development initiatives across tribal nations. Through his “Reach the Rez” tours and public speaking, he’s spent decades visiting Indigenous communities across North America, using storytelling, mentorship, and music to encourage self-determination and cultural revitalization.

His creative work, leadership, and advocacy are inseparable from his Indigenous identity. Everything he produces – whether a song, film performance, or speech – is rooted in the goal of uplifting Native voices and strengthening the link between cultural heritage and contemporary empowerment.

Lee Eden (Frankie Groves)



Lee Eden is an NYC and Austin, TX-based actor, singer, and dancer primarily focusing on theater and film. Despite being perceived as a shy little girl, she caught the acting bug at the age of 10 after watching her sister perform with Random Farms Kids Theater.

At 11, Lee made her professional debut as Brigitta Von Trapp in the John W Engeman Theater production of ‘The Sound of Music’, followed by the role of Rhoda Penmark in Nicu’s Spoon Theater production of ‘The Bad Seed’. Since then, Lee has followed her passion for the stage, appearing in over 20 theater productions, including regional, Off-off and Off-Broadway. Her screen work also includes commercials and voice-overs.

Lee enjoys singing both classical and musical theater repertoire and participating in a multitude of singing competitions, earning her first places regionally and nationally. She is a 2016 YoungArts winner in theater, and a 2019 Emerging Talent award winner by the Kurt Weill Foundation for music. Lee also indulges her musical talent by playing the ukulele and working on her guitar playing skills!

Lee is a recent graduate of Long Island University with a BFA in Theatre Arts (Musical Theatre).

CREW

STEVE GAINER

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Steve Gainer, ASC, is an American cinematographer, director, and producer renowned for his work in film and television. Born on October 25, 1962, in Alexandria, Louisiana, he has contributed to numerous notable projects, including *Bully*, *Donnie Darko*, *Mysterious Skin*, and *Punisher: War Zone*. Beyond his work on set, Gainer serves as the curator of the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) Museum, blending his passion for cinematography with a talent for engineering and communication. He is also a member of the Directors Guild of America and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Gainer's dedication to the craft and his contributions to the film industry have solidified his reputation as a respected figure in cinematography.

MORGAN HALSEY

EDITOR

Morgan Halsey is a Los Angeles-based film editor known for her work on projects like *Fear of Rain* (2021), starring Katherine Heigl and Harry Connick Jr., and *Working Man* (2019), which premiered at the Santa Barbara Film Festival. Morgan comes from a family of accomplished film editors, including her parents, Academy Award-winning Richard Halsey and Colleen Halsey, which has greatly influenced her passion for editing. She also worked on *Summer Camp* (2024), featuring Diane Keaton and Kathy Bates. Morgan continues to bring her editing expertise to the industry, building a reputation for her skill and attention to detail.

MARK HADLEY

COMPOSER

Mark Hadley is a composer and multi-instrumentalist known for his distinctive film scores that blend both synthetic and organic soundscapes. Based in Los Angeles, he has contributed his musical talents to various film projects, with notable works including his score for the 2022 film *Linoleum*, starring Jim Gaffigan and Rhea Seehorn. Hadley's ability to create atmospheric and evocative music has made him a sought-after composer in the film industry. His scores often combine emotional depth with experimental elements, making him a standout talent in contemporary film composition.



CONTACTS

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