

# MJ Kiego

Multi-generational Deaf, queer, and female creator driven to lead.

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## EXPERIENCE

### **Motion Light Lab, Washington D.C. — Production Manager**

MARCH 2025 - PRESENT

Coordinating the production team for the 3D animated TV series “*Here Comes Mavo!*” Responsible for scheduling, budgeting, logistics, and creative tasks such as transformation, translation, visuals, and design. Incorporated better management systems and metrics to collect statistics and feedback.

### **Deaf Film Festival, Austin, TX — Executive Director**

2 BIENNIAL FESTIVALS, 2023 and 2025

Provided direction, oversight, and inspiration for an accessible and inclusive festival. Created overall branding, marketing strategies, formed committees, recruited volunteers, and collaborated with the community. Managed workflow, timelines and relations with contractors, sponsors, filmmakers, and audience members.

### **Zankza Project, Austin, TX — President/Founder**

OCTOBER 2022 - PRESENT

Created and founded a non-profit organization dedicated to providing support to projects that elevate Deaf artists and creators. Responsible for fundraising, grant writing, and creating sponsorship packages. Maintaining board meetings and hiring talented Deaf individuals for the Deaf Film Festival.

### **Copper & Water, Washington D.C. — Media Director**

JANUARY 2017 - 2023

Managed independent contracts with various companies to create media content ranging from short social media clips to feature film productions. Consulted on accessibility, translation, and interpretation in media projects or services, and coordinated large scale projects that required media.

## EDUCATION

### **University of Texas, Austin — M.F.A. in Film Production**

AUGUST 2021 - MAY 2025

With emphasis on producing, directing, writing, and showrunning.

## SOFTWARE

Adobe Creative Cloud  
Final Cut Pro X & AVID  
Google and Microsoft Workspaces  
WriterDuet & FinalDraft  
Trello, Asana, Slack, Airtable, Wrike  
8mm/16mm film  
Canva

## AWARDS

**Audience Choice Award** for the film *a love letter to the light* in the Deaf Way Film Festival (2025)

**Best Animation** for the film *Dimensions* in the Clin d’Oeil Film Festival (2022)

**Best Actress** for the film *The Pastman* in the Shanghai International Deaf Film Festival and Clin d’Oeil Film Festival (2019)

## LANGUAGES

Native in American Sign Language (ASL)

Proficient in International Sign

## Rochester Institute of Technology, New York — *B.F.A. in Film*

SEPTEMBER 2008 - DECEMBER 2013

With a double major (B.S.) in Psychology, a minor in Deaf Culture Studies, and a performing arts certificate for stage/theater productions.

### PROJECTS

#### Deaf Spotlight — 2025-2026

Festival Director for the 2026 Seattle Deaf Film Festival on April 10-12. Operating regular meetings and revigorating previous marketing strategies and content. Responsible for coordinating the in-person and virtual elements of the festival, ensuring full accessibility. <https://www.deafspotlight.org/sdff>

#### Deaf Way Film Festival — 2024-2025

Director of Events for the Deaf Way Film Festival hosted by Gallaudet University on October 16-19, 2025. Involved with core committee meetings and decisions regarding festival vision and direction, both creatively and objectively. <https://gallaudet.edu/deaf-way-film-festival/>

#### Here Comes Mavo! — 2025 (post-production)

A first of its kind, the 52 episode 3D animation TV series features Mavo from the Baobab Universe. All characters sign in American Sign Language, capturing the imagination and hearts of children everywhere. I help coordinate scheduling, contacts, and ensure that deadlines are met in terms of production and marketing/merchandising. <https://herecomesmavo.com/>

#### Deaf Film Festival — 2022-present

Created and led the first ever Deaf Film Festival in Austin, Texas. Helped plan, develop, and implement the festival agenda, coordinate team members on project timelines and budgets. The 2025 festival was a huge success, having over 400 registrants and being awarded an Elevate grant from the city of Austin's Arts & Culture grant, supplemented with further sponsorships. We screened 25 different films across 5 different categories: Animation, Short Documentary/Narrative, Feature Documentary/Narrative. Award winners were invited given and gift certificates to film production services such as Writerduet and LensRental. <https://www.deafff.com/>

#### Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore — 2024-2025

Assistant editor for the feature documentary film that premiered in the 2025 Sundance and SXSW film festivals. Helped log, organize, and edit over hundreds of hours of footage from ASL to English with time codes, transcripts, and translations. Created technical special effects and graphics. Tracked story development and coordinated with producers for the film.

Moderate French Sign Language (LSF)

### TECH SKILLS

Screenwriting

ASL-English Translations

Filming

Directing

Producing

Captioning

Editing Video

Managing Schedules

Grant writing

Maximizing AI tools

### GRANTS & SPONSORSHIPS

City of Austin Culture & Arts Grant - \$160,000

HEB Grocery Store - \$6,500

ServerDev - >\$5,000

Texas School for the Deaf - \$12,000

Dovetail Communications Group - \$7,000

Inka's Screen Printing - >\$4,000

LensRental - \$2,000

## **A Love Letter to the Light — 2024**

This pre-thesis experimental short film focuses on how film and sound converge and depart. Using mainly 8mm film, this project pays homage to the silent films made in the early 20th century while experimenting with the presence of, loss of, and distortion of sound.

*Awarded Audience Choice for Documentary Short at the Deaf Way Film Festival (2025), Nominated for best Aristic Short at the Deaffest Film Festival (2026), Officially selected at Las Cruces International Film Festival, SkyArts Film Festival, Unify Deaf Film Festival, and World Culture Film Festival (2025).*

## **Idle hands — 2023**

Produced this short film created by Douglas Ridloff (*Marvel's ECHO series*), starring SAG actor James Caverly (*Only Murders in the Building*). Managed contracts, paperwork, budgeting, and contributed to creative and technical solutions for production.

## **Untitled Mav Project — 2023**

Field producer for Nyle Dimarco's documentary series focusing on Mavrick William Martin-Fisher's murder and how he rose to international fame. Reached out to subjects, interviewed them, and made notes. Created spreadsheets about relationships, bios, timelines, and events.

## **Interpretation — 2023**

Directed, wrote, and edited this short film that was inspired by a classroom experience during my time in school.

*Officially selected in 5 film festivals. Nominated in Della Awards (2023) and SignLight International Film Festival (2024) for Best Short/Student film.*

## **Raising CODAS — 2022**

Directed, filmed, and edited this short documentary that interviews two Children of Deaf Adults (CODAS) and their family.

*Nominated for best documentary, and best Director in the Della Awards (2023) Official selection for the SignLight International Film Festival (2024) and Seattle Deaf Film Festival (2024)*

## **DEAF U — 2020**

Part time field logger for the Netflix series "Deaf U" produced by Nyle DiMarco while I held down a full time job with Motion Light Lab, working 7 days a week for nearly 2 months at Gallaudet University in Washington DC.

## **Hands Land — 2015 & 2025**

Filmed and edited the compelling visual rhythms of ASL songs. Used in schools and curriculums nationally in injunction with coursework on Podia.