

## Jacob Sussman ('17)

### Education:

Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT

May 2017

Bachelor of Arts Candidate, Major: Film Studies; GPA 3.61

- Relevant Coursework: History of World Cinema, The Documentary Film, Writing for Television, Introduction to Programming

### Film Experience

**The Wesleyan Film Project**, *Founder and General Manager*,  
Middletown, CT

April 2014 - Present

- Manage a student-run film production organization with eight staff members and 180 auxiliary members.
- Distribute \$8,000 in funding from Wesleyan University to support the production of 17 short films

**Wesleyan = Impact Video Series**, *Film Producer and Project Manager*, Middletown, CT

April 2014 - Present

- Develop six-part video series to showcase social impact achieved by Wesleyan University for the #THISISWHY campaign.
- Distribute work amongst team of student filmmakers, organize project logistics, and compile videos through multi-stage editing process,

**Pelham Island Pictures**, *Co-Founder and CEO*,  
Wayland, MA

March 2013 - Present

- Manage a documentary film studio that produces professional-quality content for small businesses and non-profits.
- Handle client relations, initiate project development, and perform film production duties such as filming, interviewing, and editing on over 10 paid projects.

**Walden Forum**, *Filmmaker and Speaker*, Wayland, MA

November 2014

- Researched history of Wayland, MA to produce *Five Miles Astride the River: The Story of Wayland*, a 17-minute documentary made in honor of the town's 375th anniversary.
- Debuted the film at a community event attended by over 500 people, co-hosted by the Walden Forum and the Wayland Historical Society.
- View film: [www.vimeo.com/114094342](http://www.vimeo.com/114094342); password: zcjspip
- Learn more: [www.waldenforum.org/2014/11/local-history-a-window-to-view-larger-themes-of-the-american-experience/](http://www.waldenforum.org/2014/11/local-history-a-window-to-view-larger-themes-of-the-american-experience/)

**Pelham Island Pictures Summer Film School,**

*Co-Founder and Teacher, Wayland, MA*

Summer 2014

- Designed two-week summer program curriculum to familiarize middle-school students with digital film production.
- Taught class of eight students and supervised production of nine student projects.

**Wayland Student Press Network,**

*Multimedia Editor, Wayland, MA*

September 2012 - June 2013

**Awards**

**Jacob Sussman Award, Wayland Student Press Network, Wayland, MA June 2013**

- Inaugural recipient of award named after myself, given to a student journalist who has produced video content of exceptional quality.

**Gold Medal, National Scholastic Press Association, San Francisco, CA March 2013**

- Awarded to a multimedia news package that I co-produced in competition at a national high school journalism convention.
- Received perfect score on the video component for which I was responsible, and highest honors on the overall package.

**Best Narrative Film, Arlington International Film Festival, Arlington, MA**

- Awarded to my short film *Molineux* after being screened in the high school section of the Arlington International Film Festival

**Skills/Interests**

- Skills: Film production, cinematography lighting, editing, interviewing, business management
- Software: Adobe Creative Suite (Premiere, After Effects, Photoshop, Illustrator), Final Cut Pro X, Final Cut Pro 7
- Interests: Social entrepreneurship, global outreach, artistic development

## **Jacob Sussman ('17)**

### **Program Proposal**

1. Provide a brief overview of the organization for which you will intern or program/project you are developing.

**I am applying to produce a 10-15 minute documentary about the Comunidad Inti Wara Yassi, a Bolivian organization founded in 1992 with the goal of caring for Bolivian wildlife affected by illegal animal trafficking and educating the public on wildlife preservation. To produce this film, I will undertake a combined service and filmmaking residency at Parque Ambue Ari, a 2000-acre facility near Trinidad, Bolivia that cares for over twenty species of animals, including howler monkeys, tortoises, pumas and jaguars.**

**My film will explore the environmental and social impact achieved by Inti Wara Yassi by interweaving interviews of the park's volunteers and staff with extensive on-site footage recorded at Parque Ambue Ari. The Inti Wara Yassi volunteer staff is largely international, and I will explore the varying motivations and ideologies which have drawn people from across the globe to this facility. My project objective will be to produce a shortfilm that can be submitted to film festivals and distributed online as part of an upcoming fundraising campaign planned by Inti Wara Yassi to raise awareness and support for the organization's work.**

**I first heard of the Comunidad Inti Wara Yassi from a close high school friend who spent six months volunteering at Parque Ambue Ari after graduating high school. My friend recently returned to the park for a second extended service trip, and I will join him in Bolivia to produce our documentary under the mentorship of Inti Wara Yassi and the park's staff and volunteers. I currently manage a film production company, Pelham Island Pictures, with my close friend and filmmaking partner Zander Cowen. Zander will assist me with this project, possibly traveling to Bolivia with me if financially feasible.**

**Gabriel Doss, a fellow Wesleyan student and close friend, is also applying for a Summer Experience Grant application so that we may collaborate in producing this project. We understand that this may lead to one of us getting funded, but not the other. In this case, we are both prepared to take on the project independently, but we believe our collaboration would result in the best overall project.**

2. Briefly provide details of the internship or experience, including responsibilities and tasks.

**I am designing a 10-week experience consisting of two parts; a six-week service and filmmaking residency at Parque Ambue Ari in Bolivia, and four-weeks of digital video editing in my hometown of Wayland, MA. During my 6-week stay in Bolivia, I will serve as both a filmmaker and volunteer, producing a documentary while simultaneously assisting the park's staff in their work. The first two-week portion of my stay will be focused on engaging with the park's social community, and performing duties such as feeding, walking, and cleaning the animals with my fellow volunteers. This process will help me to acquire an understanding of the park's operations and its volunteers' personalities, so that I may fairly represent them in my film. During the first two-weeks I will also shoot large amounts of b-roll footage to showcase the natural environment of Bolivia, and document the efforts of the park's volunteers to care for sheltered animals. At the end of my stay, I will shape the narrative of my documentary by conducting over 20 interviews with the park's staff and volunteers, exploring their backstories and connections to the organization.**

**Upon returning home, I will begin the time intensive process of video editing, which I anticipate may take upwards of 200 hours. I will complete a rough cut of the documentary by the end of the summer, and complete final refinements, such as sound mixing and color correction, over winter break.**

3. How have you communicated with the employer and determined mutual interest?

**I have already conducted an extensive Skype interview with Jon Cassidy, the Secretary of International Relations for Inti Wara Yassi. Mr. Cassidy was extremely excited about my project proposal. He provided me with a comprehensive summary of the logistical details I would need to be aware of in organizing this trip, and has enthusiastically offered to be my sponsor. Inti Wara Yassi funds its wildlife preserves primarily through donations from volunteers, and is thus always excited to take new people on, especially those who would be able to raise awareness for the park's mission through experiences such as documentary filmmaking. The Inti Wara Yassi documentary film project would not be possible without the financial support of the Summer Experience Grant.**

4. How will this experience enhance or broaden your career goals?

**My professional goal is to become a documentary filmmaker who makes socially impactful films through an international lens, immersing myself in unfamiliar cultures and places to uncover the incredible projects and efforts that might otherwise have gone unrecognized. Although I have produced several ambitious projects in the past, the process of creating content to serve**

**the needs of small companies and corporations has led me to crave work which is more experiential in nature, and socially impactful in its effect. Traveling to Bolivia and immersing myself in the world of Parque Ambue Ari will be my first experience making a documentary with potential for significant social impact, and will set me on a path to produce more meaningful types of films after graduating.**

**As a filmmaker, it is essential that I am constantly refining my craft to improve my skills and discover new possibilities in the cinematic medium. Since being exposed to filmmaking through an arts program I took during the summer after 9th grade, I have sought out nearly a dozen extracurricular film programs, and I have constantly engaged with independent projects and video experimentation.**

**My career as a filmmaker progressed significantly during the spring of my senior year, when I co-founded a documentary film production company, Pelham Island Pictures. Our first major project was a 20-minute historical documentary exploring the history of our hometown, produced in honor of the town's 375th anniversary. Later, we partnered with the Patricelli Center for Social Entrepreneurship to produce a six-part video series for the #THISISWHY campaign profiling a roster of socially impactful Wesleyan alumni. These projects have been extensive, rigorous, and challenging, and have prepared me to produce documentary films at a professional level. I have an in-depth understanding of the medium, the logistical and artistic challenges it contains, and a realistic bearing of how long these projects take to actually complete. Although traveling to Bolivia will pose new logistical challenges and obstacles that I have not yet faced, I am confident that my artistic ability matches that required by the project.**

**While studying with a professional documentary filmmaker at Brandeis University during the summer after 10th grade, I acquired the belief that all documentarians have an inherent responsibility to help better the world through their films, and to portray their subjects with compassion, understanding, and empathy. To facilitate these goals, I have designed my residency at Parque Ambue Ari to be an experience of cultural immersion and social bonding, culminating in an ethnographic study of the park and the social relationships that constitute its community. The project combines all of my ambitions and goals as a documentary filmmaker into a singular, logistically feasible project which will prepare me to pursue this style of work at a higher level in the future. Furthermore, the film itself will become an engine of social change, as Inti Wara Yassi will distribute the project as part of an upcoming fundraising campaign to raise awareness and support for the organization's work. Through this process I will learn about how my medium can be leveraged to raise awareness, incite discussion, and provoke people to take action around urgent social issues.**

**The process of making a film in Bolivia will certainly be challenging, and I have no illusions about the pitfalls posed by international travel, a language barrier, and the unpredictable mishaps which may come between me and my goal. However, if I want to become a professional documentary filmmaker, I need to become comfortable with the challenges inherent to leaving my world to document something beyond it. After my summer in Bolivia, I will spend a semester studying abroad in either Nepal or Vietnam, where I will study the culture and politics of my host country through a homestay experience, and complete a month-long independent study project on a subject of my choosing. I deliberately chose these study abroad programs because they stress cultural immersion and experiential learning, and like my experience in Bolivia they will help to prepare me for more ambitious documentary film projects that also reinforce these qualities.**

**By producing a socially impactful documentary now, while I am a student at Wesleyan, I will be preparing myself to pursue social good through experiential film projects after graduating. I have long been inspired by the work of filmmakers such as James Longley and Jean Rouch, who plunge themselves into foreign cultures and areas of active conflict to reveal disparate aspects of the human experience and explore what unifies us as a species. To produce films of their caliber and substance is my greatest ambition, and I would be deeply honored to take a step in this direction with your support.**