

Coming Attractions

## Colorado Dragon Boat Film Festival celebrates AAPI stories

Recommended activities for the coming weeks



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Column by [Clarke Reader](#)

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Proving the power of storytelling has been part of the Colorado Dragon Boat Film Festival since its inception and this year it is taking the time to celebrate all the voices that share their stories.

“Our theme this year is ‘Celebrating Our Stories,’ which follows last year’s theme of ‘Celebrating Resilience,’” explained Sara Moore, [Colorado Dragon Boat](#) executive director. “The stories we’re sharing may not usually be heard or seen, which means projecting them on the big screen provides awesome potential for connection.”

The **8<sup>th</sup> annual Colorado Dragon Boat Film Festival**, hosted by Colorado Dragon Boat and [Denver Film](#), opens Thursday, March 9 and runs through Sunday, the 12th at the **Sie FilmCenter**, 2510 E. Colfax Ave., and the **Freyer - Newman Center at Denver Botanic Gardens**, 1085 York St. in Denver.

The festival includes 11 films, all of which honor the experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) communities. Highlights include the opening night film, [“Arnold is a Model Student,”](#) which is described in provided information as “a satirical coming-of-age story examining contemporary Thai culture through the lens of the country’s youth.”

Another important film screening is [“Reclaiming Denver’s Chinatown,”](#) a documentary about the racism Chinese residents faced in the Mile High City. And, for the first time, the festival will wrap up at the Denver Botanic Gardens, with a screening of [“I Am What I Am,”](#) an animated film about a teenage boy who wants to learn the art of traditional Chinese lion dancing.

As is so often the case with film festivals, some of the most exciting events are the extracurricular activities that enhance the movies. Of note are two community conversations the festival is hosting: at 11 a.m. on Saturday, March 11, “Celebrating the Stories of Our LGBTQ+ Asian American Pacific Islander Community,” will be held and at 11 a.m. on Sunday, March 12, audiences can participate in “Celebrating the Stories of our Multiracial AAPI Community.”

“These topics come from listening to the community, which provides us with so many options,” Moore said. “Over the last three years we’ve seen huge increases in hate, racism and intolerance and we’re trying to fight this in many ways. Community conversations are great ways to help, because they give people the opportunity to hear stories and make these issues less unknown.”

In addition to live Q&As with filmmakers following some screenings, there will also be an Asian marketplace and culinary experience available to those who attend with an appetite. No matter how audiences want to engage with the festival, Moore hopes they’ll come with questions and a willingness to learn.

“The beauty of the event is bringing people together every year to show that the stories we all share have so many similarities,” she said. “People can come together and feel a real sense of warmth and acceptance, and that’s really my goal for the festival.”

For information, individual tickets and passes, visit [www.cdfilm.org](http://www.cdfilm.org).

*Watch the Oscars with fellow film lovers at Sie FilmCenter*

The Oscars are back to honor some of the year's best films (though I am personally outraged that ["Babylon"](#) didn't receive a best picture nomination). As has become tradition, Denver Film is celebrating the year in movies with a big party (just like the one in "Babylon").

**The Brightest Night in Hollywood** begins at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 12 at the **Sie FilmCenter**, 2510 E. Colfax Ave. in Denver. Attendees are encouraged to either get fully decked out or come in their comfiest pajamas and enjoy a live screening on all three of the center's screens, with drink specials at the bar and food specials also available. The event is free, so visit <https://denverfilm.eventive.org/films> to RSVP for a spot.