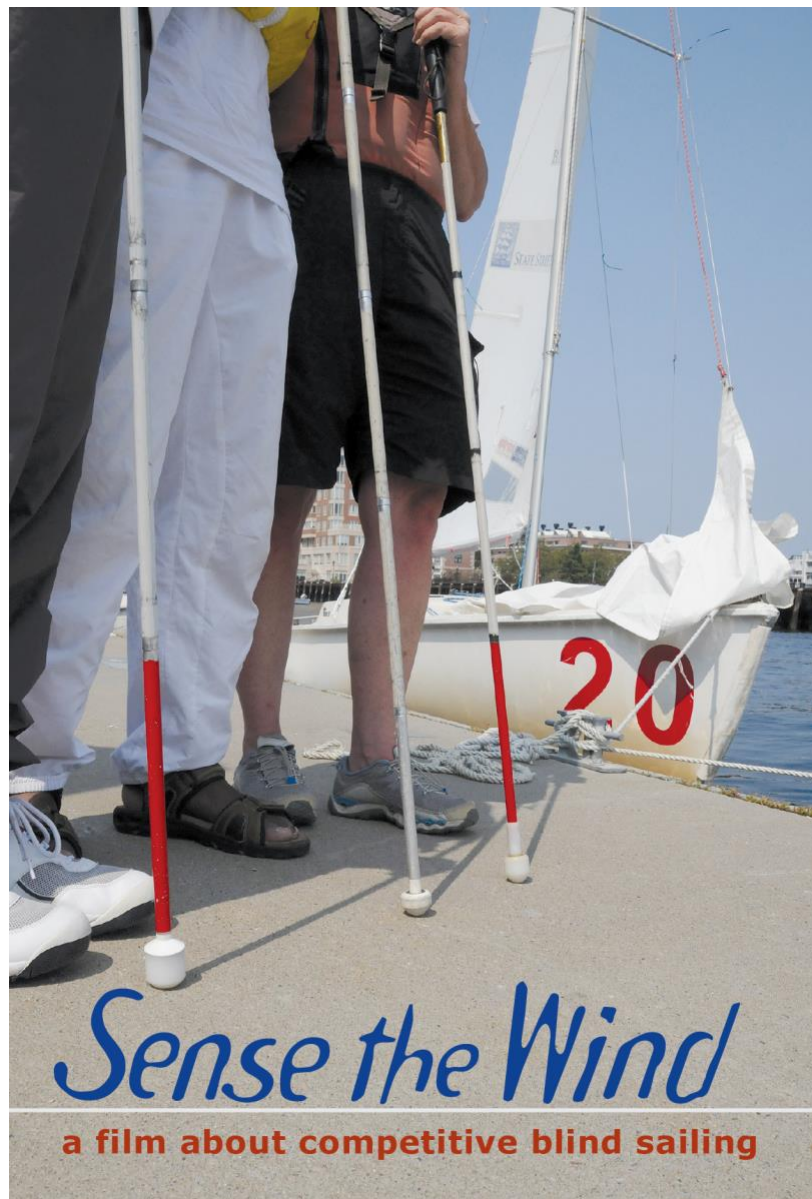


# *Sense the Wind*

*Blind sailors race across open water*



[SenseTheWind.com](http://SenseTheWind.com)

## Project Description

*The sea is bright, there's a steady wind out of the SW, the race meeting is over and a conga-line of sailors makes its way to the waterfront. A white cane taps along the dock, an outstretched hand struggles to grab a halyard to step up onto the boat deck.*

In regattas across the US and abroad, visually impaired sailors learn not to fear what they cannot see. They sail by feel: sensing the breeze on a cheek or tension in the tiller, listening to the pattern of waves hitting the hull and sails luffing in the wind. Sighted guides describe the racecourse and give tactical race advice. On the water disability is no longer a focus.

**Sense the Wind** is a journey into the sport of blind sailing and into the lives of four of its competitors. On board cameras and audio capture the high stakes tension. Camera angles at the Start, Marks and Finish Line of each race bring the viewer up close to the action. Competition is fierce in fleet racing. We are in the race with Inky, Matt, Nancy and Phil.

Our four principle characters have diverse backgrounds with varying skill levels and experience. When Nancy's sight eroded mid-life, she found freedom and independence in racing. Phil's vision was damaged during emergency brain surgery in his last semester of college. Sailing lifted him from depression and restored confidence. At fifteen, sudden blindness brought Inky from the Congo to the US, but surgery failed. Matt was blind shortly after his premature birth but speeds ahead with no image of the horizon or limitations. Matt and Inky, the more experienced competitors, steer their boats, as Phil and Nancy handle the lines and trim the sails for their teams. All train and sail hard, finding common ground with humor and camaraderie on shore. The challenge of racing helps Nancy, Matt, Inky and Phil reach for new heights at work and at home.

Between race seasons, Nancy's life takes another unexpected turn. She gains something more valuable than a trophy but must adapt, once again, to learn to sail and live with a new sensibility. The film follows the evolution of these individuals over several years as they advance as sailors, through life's turns -- medical challenges, marriage, retirement and the vicissitudes of their sport. Competitive blind sailing is a new and evolving sport. Over time they help to shape the future of blind sailing.

**Sense the Wind** brings to life stories from under-served communities of people with disabilities. A variety of advisory partners anxious to screen the film include: disability organizations, educational institutions, adaptive competitive sports teams and the sailing community. This film provides rich narrative content for viewers whether sighted, blind, vision impaired, disabled or for anyone in search of an inspiring story.

In the end, **Sense the Wind** subtly challenges us to consider what we are willing to do with the abilities that we have and to re-examine our notion of what dis-ability means.

## Characters

Matt Chao, Blind Skipper

Nancy Jodoin, Blind Crew

Philip Kum, Blind Crew

Inkiala (Inky) Sengali, Blind Skipper

## Awards

Humanitarian Award, Socially Relevant Film Festival NY 2016

## Press

WindCheck

Yahoo Japan

Boating Times LI

Boat Radio

## Director's Statement

Sometimes the best things are found unexpectedly. While attending a collegiate awards dinner with my daughter, a slide presentation on adaptive sailing was given by Betsy Alison, the US Sailing Paralympic Head Coach. I was moved by how these challenged individuals skillfully raced regardless of disability and, was especially intrigued by a brief mention of blind sailing. A light bulb switched on in my head. From that moment, I was driven to explore, to understand and bring to light this unique sport and the efforts of these persevering athletes.

Nancy, Inky, Matt and Philip became my personal guides into the blind sailing community. Numerous blind and sighted sailors, coaches, staff and volunteers also became enthusiastic participants. Eager for their stories to be shared, these blind sailors granted open access and, on occasion, even provided a guest bed.

As a first time feature filmmaker, like new blind sailors, I have been on a constant steep learning curve. Production began when I first showed up at a Boston practice with up my HDV camera and evolved to working with seasoned sound crew and some of the top marine cinematographers. The collaboration with our editor showed me how hundreds of hours of media from many formats could be woven into a

beautiful, cohesive story.

Sitting alongside my talented composer, an inventive sound designer and a brilliant colorist as they worked their magic was a creative experience I will always treasure. My journey continues into the technicalities of making the film fully accessible with video description and evaluating the intricacies of distribution and outreach.

Project Advisors, Betsy Alison, the US Sailing Paralympic Head Coach, and Arthur O'Neill of the Carroll Center Sailblind Program, have been generous and invaluable resources. Buttons Padin joined the team to provide invaluable marketing and fundraising assistance. Many others generously offered valuable feedback, assistance and support. Our notable Advisory Partner organizations that share our mission will take the film to their communities.

What has been discovered over these years working on SENSE THE WIND has more widely opened my own eyes and heart, while enriching life with a more diverse circle of friends. It is this enlightened sensibility that I hope to share through the film and continue to broaden the circle.

## Production Notes

**Sense the Wind** has been made in close collaboration with our four principle characters and numerous sailors, along with input from of our advisers in the adaptive sports, disability and sailing communities. Since beginning in 2009, the film production moved from yacht clubs and sailing centers coast to coast and afar, on and off boats, from starting lines to finish lines, into their homes and work, and to the doctor's office and a hospital. Our locations were Boston, Newport, Rhode Island, San Francisco, CA and Miura, Japan for the Blind Sailing World Championships.

Internationally known marine cinematographers (America's Cup, Volvo Ocean Race) used large Schwem lens with prisms and onboard cameras to capture the race action up close. Inventive self-leveling boat mounts for GoPros and Vios cameras were synced with mics worn by sailors to record the onboard drama first hand. In two regattas, three boats with one character and the tactician on each were recorded from when they left the dock to when the battery expired, giving us a wealth of sailing material to transcode and make selects for editing.

Interstitial dramatic aerial shots of Japan were generously lent by Gary Jobson, and Vince Casalaina with original graphic maps introduce regatta locations in CA, RI and Japan. A short animated sequence with moving water and sounds graphically illustrates a racecourse. Point of view footage with visual effects evoke the unique perception of our characters. Intimate, reflective moments are captured handheld.

A rich soundscape has been created with visceral sounds of sailing: water, sails, winches, etc. An original score composed by frequent Taymor/ Goldenthal collaborator, enhances the experience. A video described version of the film for the blind and visually impaired will be created and made available upon distribution.

## Creative Team Biographies

### **Producer/Director – Christine Knowlton**

Christine Knowlton evolved from a career in textile art and design into the digital arts and film. She is the Producer/Director of her first feature documentary about blind sailing, *Sense The Wind*. Her first short, *Going Blank: Alzheimer's Stories*, screened in festivals internationally. She has created promotional videos for non-profit organizations, including the U.S. Disabled Sailing Championships and the Robie Pierce One-Design and Women's Regatta, as well as a pitch trailer for the historical documentary project, *Circle of Honor*. She created experimental multimedia videos with international contemporary composers and worked in broadcast production on the HBO hit, *Bored to Death* and other network TV series and films. Christine was a selected filmmaker for the Celebrating Women Filmmakers Education Outreach at the Jacob Burns Film Center and worked an adjunct video instructor for the SUNY/WCC Summer Digital Labs. Christine was the Film Festival and Outreach Distribution Coordinator for Doug Block's award winning documentary, *The Children Next Door*, and more recently, worked as an Outreach Advocacy Consultant with CreativeFuture, an anti-piracy arts organization.

### **Producer – Elizabeth Delude-Dix**

Elizabeth Delude-Dix is an independent filmmaker producing and directing independent documentaries: *Traces of the Trade* (Co-Producer/ Executive Producer) opened at Sundance, POV 2009 season premier, Emmy nomination; *Stories from Stone and No Simple Truth* (Director), two short films on slavery which screened on RI PBS; *First Face: The Buck Starts* (Co-Producer) screened on PBS. Elizabeth currently serves on the board of the Flaherty International Film Seminar, past Board Chair of the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, founder of RI NPR and served on the boards of arts and advocacy organizations.

### **Camera - Vince Casalaina**

Vince has been covering sailboat racing around the world since 1985. He's won two Emmy's for Sports Programming. The first for his co-production of the 1985 Big Boat Series regatta at the St. Francis Yacht Club and the second for the 1996 Citibank Regatta series at PIER 39. Since then he's been team videographer for two America's Cup campaigns and covered the US Olympic Sailing Trials twice. Current work includes producing a documentary on the 80-year-old one design Snipe Class and coverage of the America's Cup Regatta featuring 45' catamarans.

### **Camera – Jay Millard**

Jay has won an Emmy and Directors Guild of America awards for his superb work as a Camera Operator, Director and Associate Director of televised live events that have aired on PBS, HBO, CBS, ABC, Showtime, TBS, VH-1, The Food Network and stations around the country. Jay has taped and directed live broadcasts at Carnegie Hall, Metropolitan Opera, and New York Public Library's Performing Arts Dance Collection featuring the NYC Ballet, ABT, Alvin Ailey, Joffrey, Eliot Feld and others.

### **Camera – SOE/Kaoru Soehata**

Soe is a world-renowned sailing photographer, DP, documentary filmmaker and competitive sailor who introduced blind sailing to Japan. Working closely with his wife, Tomo, an accomplished Writer, Producer and Photographer, they divide their year between Japan and New Zealand. For over 30 years, Soe has documented Olympic Sailing for Japan, earlier America's Cup Races, segments and features on ESPN, NHK, TV Tokyo, and major boating publications. Soe & Tomo founded and produce the historic Sabani Races.

### **Camera – Onne van der Wal**

Onne began shooting nearly 30 years ago as a member of the Dutch “Whitbread Around the World Race” team sailing aboard Conny van Rietschoten’s, *Flyer*, and is now one of the most admired shooters in the nautical world, Onne’s endeavors with photography and video have made him one of 62 sponsored Canon “Explorers of Light” as well as supporting an international reaching Newport gallery. Onne’s work is regularly published in sailing and travel magazines worldwide.

### **Editor – Cheree Dillon**

Cheree Dillon is an independent film/tv editor working and living in NYC. Most recently she edited the broadcast version of *Homestretch* for PBS’s Independent Lens 2014 series. Her first feature documentary, the award-winning documentary *Off and Running*, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2009, was broadcast on PBS’s P.O.V. series, and was nominated for an Emmy. Cheree’s other feature doc credits are *Surviving Amina* and *Song of Hannah*, along with several award-winning short docs including, *Southmost USA* and *An Imaginary Thing*. She has edited for NBC’s *The Today Show*, and other long format programming for NBC Sports, The Science Channel, and Discovery.

### **Composer – Richard Martinez**

Martinez has made a career in music that has involved collaborations with renowned musicians, theater and film directors, and other composers. His original scores include the documentaries, *Raquel, a Marked Woman* directed by Gabriela Bohm, which is currently in the international festival circuit winning numerous awards. Other films include: *The Undocumented*, by Marco Williams for ITVS. *The Longoria Affair*, by John J. Valadez, (PBS), nominated for an Emmy. Also by Mr. Valadez, *The Last Conquistador* (POV). Other scores include *Blast!* (Paul Devlin), *Antonia Pantoja ¡Presente!* (Lillian Jimenez), *Howard Zinn: You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train* (Deb Ellis and Denis Mueller) shortlisted for an Oscar (2005), and *The Daytrippers* (Greg Mottola). In theater Martinez has composed music for the Hamptons Theater Festival production of *Viva la Vida!*, directed by Susana Tubert and starring Tony Award winner Mercedes Ruehl. He also composed for the production of *The Dog in the Manger* (Shakespeare Theater Company, Washington DC). Martinez continues to produce music for acclaimed Oscar winner composer Elliot Goldenthal and theater and film director Julie Taymor. Most recently for the production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Notable films by Ms. Taymor include: *The Tempest*, *Frida* and *Across the Universe*. Martinez is currently working with Elliot Goldenthal as Electronic Music Designer in Julie Taymor’s *Grounded* starring Anne Hathaway.

## **Advisory Partners**

We are working with a wide range of partners whose mission we share and who will help *Sense the Wind* find audience and achieve lasting impact.

American Council for the Blind  
Blind Sailing International  
Carroll Center for the Blind SailBlind Program  
International Federation of Disabled Sailing  
Lions Center for the Blind  
National Federation of the Blind  
Sail Newport  
Tufts Medical Center  
US Sailing Association

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