



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUSTIN FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES UPLIFTING STORYTELLERS INITIATIVE

A lauded Advisory Committee and Blackmagic Collective Fellowship Award anchor initiative

Austin, TX (April 21, 2022) – Austin Film Festival & Writers Conference (AFF), the premier film festival recognizing the writers’ contributions to film, television, and new media, announced today the launch of their diversity & inclusion module known as the **Uplifting Storytellers Initiative** as well as the inaugural **Blackmagic Collective Emerging Filmmakers Fellowship Award**. This initiative is designed to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the entertainment industry by defining and executing skill-based, as well as career focused enrichment programs through the bevy of AFF’s competitions, Conference, and more. The organization is focusing on actionable steps towards sustainable change, to increase representation across underrepresented communities. This includes a multifaceted approach to increase targeted fellowship opportunities within its Film and Script Competitions, and panel participation its events and the Writers Conference, and expand upon their Digital Storytelling Education Program into more schools across Texas.

As part of the new initiative, the Festival announced a vaunted Advisory Committee which will provide reinforcement to the initiative's goals and direction as needed. Members of the committee include industry heavyweights:

- **VJ Boyd** (co-creator, Lincoln Rhyme: Hunt For The Bone Collector; writer/producer S.W.A.T, Justified, The Player, Justified: City Primeval)
- **Wendy Calhoun** (Peabody Award Winner; writer/producer Empire, Prodigal Son, Station 19, Nashville, Revenge, Justified)
- **Noah Hawley** (writer/producer Fargo, Legion, Bones)
- **Chuck Hayward** (Co-Ep Ted Lasso; writer/producer WandaVision, Flatbush Misdemeanors)
- **Ali LeRoi** (director The Obituary of Tunde Johnson; producer/director Survivor’s Remorse; showrunner/co-creator Everybody Hates Chris)
- **Jenny Marchick** (Head of Development - Features, Dreamworks Animation)
- **Rebecca Windsor** (VP & Head of Warner Bros. Television Workshop)

Meanwhile, the brand new **Blackmagic Collective (BMC) Emerging Filmmakers Fellowship Award** is a stunning realization of the initiative's goals. The winner of the award is invited to AFF in the of Fall 2022, and will receive a Blackmagic Design Pocket 6K Pro, guaranteed screening slot at the BMC Film Festival in Los Angeles, and a guaranteed seat in the Fellowship running from January 2023 - November 2023. Furthermore, finalists (the top 10 films within the category) will receive exclusive automatic first look consideration for remaining Fellowship slots. The Fellowship will be available to Narrative and Student Short entrants within AFF Film Competitions, and is specifically targeted at members of the BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, Female-Identifying, and Disabled communities.

For further information on the Uplifting Storytellers Initiative, visit <https://bit.ly/37ymWTV>.



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ABOUT AUSTIN FILM FESTIVAL:

Austin Film Festival (AFF) is a non-profit organization that champions the work of aspiring and established writers and filmmakers by providing unique cultural events and services, enhancing public awareness and participation, and encouraging dynamic and long-lasting community partnerships. AFF is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department and the Texas Commission on the Arts. Badges and passes are available for purchase online at www.austinfilmfestival.com or by phone at 1-800-310-FEST.

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