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FILM INDEPENDENT SELECTS SIX FELLOWS FOR THIRD ANNUAL AMPLIFIER FELLOWSHIP

Awards \$180,000 in Cash Grants

LOS ANGELES (March 13, 2024) — Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Film Independent Spirit Awards, announced today the six Fellows and their projects selected for its Amplifier Fellowship, a program that provides direct support to emerging and mid-career Black or African American filmmakers. The 2024 Film Independent Amplifier Fellowship is supported by founding sponsor Netflix and its [Fund for Creative Equity](#). The studio is behind acclaimed projects such as *Rustin*, *Stamped from the Beginning*, *The Harder They Fall* and *Da 5 Bloods*.

Over the course of the twelve-month program, the Amplifier Fellows will receive bespoke support to further both their career and projects as well as customized mentorship pairings with a Netflix executive as an industry advisor and a board member from Film Independent. Each Fellow will also receive professional coaching in partnership with Renee Freedman & Co, and financial and business advisement in partnership with The Jill James. Each Fellow will receive a \$30,000 unrestricted grant to provide sustainability and/or support their creative endeavors.

“The Amplifier Fellowship provides impactful creative and strategic support to selected Fellows so that they can further strengthen their foundations as both artists and entrepreneurs to have lasting and sustainable careers,” said Angela C. Lee, Director of Artist Development at Film Independent. “We are so excited to support our impressive third cohort of Amplifier Fellows and work with them over the next year to help them reach the next level in their careers.”

The 2024 Amplifier Fellows and their projects are:

Zandashé Brown, Writer/Director

Zandashé Brown is a storyteller and writer/director born-and-bred in and inspired by southern Louisiana. As a daughter of the abandoned American South, she blends Black Southern introspection and spirituality with surrealistic horror to tell stories about neglected places and peoples. Brown is an alum of the 2022 Sundance Screenwriters Lab and Directors Lab for her debut feature-in-development, *The Matriarch*, as well as an alum of the 2021 Tribeca Chanel Women's Filmmaker Program. She was named one of Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces of Independent Film for 2022.

The Matriarch

Fiction Feature

Logline: In the aftermath of her mother's psychotic break, a precocious teenage girl battles her own impending wellness crisis by grounding herself in her late grandmother's spiritual practice.

Moira Griffin, Producer

Moira Griffin is a producer, strategist and former executive with New Bumper and Paint Productions in partnership with writer/director Marshall Tyler. Their most recent award-winning projects include *Slow Pulse* (CBS/BET), *Cap* (HBO), *Night Shift* (Sundance) Executive produced by Juvee Productions, and *Landline* (Hulu). Her projects have premiered at festivals including Sundance Film Festival, SXSW, ABFF, and the Tribeca Film Festival. NBP is currently developing projects across all genres including the documentary, *The Prince of Seventh Ave* and the narrative film *Fever Dream*. In addition, she is producing the documentary *The Inquisitor* directed by Angela Tucker through her company Alice's Plan.

The Prince of 7th Ave: The Legend of WilliWear/Willi Smith

Nonfiction Feature

Logline: *The Prince of 7th Ave: The Legend of WilliWear/Willi Smith* is a feature-length documentary exploring the incredible life, career and legacy of Willi Smith, an innovative Black American designer who disrupted the fashion industry with his eponymous label, WilliWear and single-handedly changed the way we dress today—yet somehow, he remains largely unknown.

Crystal Kayiza, Director/Producer

Crystal Kayiza is a filmmaker raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma now based in Brooklyn, NY. Her film *Rest Stop*, won the Jury Prize for Best US Short at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival. Her film, *Edgcombe*, screened at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and premiered on POV. The following year, *See You Next Time*, was selected for the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and was released by *The New Yorker*. Named one of Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces of Independent Film, Crystal is a recipient of the Creative Capital Award, Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship and HBO / The Gotham Documentary Development Initiative.

The Gardeners

Nonfiction Feature

Logline: *The Gardeners* follows the Worthy Women of Watkins Street Cemetery, keepers of one of the oldest Black cemeteries in Mississippi.

Mobolaji Olambiwonnu, Writer/Director/Producer

Mobolaji is a storyteller/educator with Jamaican Christian and Nigerian Muslim parents. Growing up mediating multiple cultural identities has inspired him to use cinema as a tool to illuminate the superficial conditions that divide us and accentuate the merits of shedding our prejudices. He attended UCLA and The American Film Institute. His feature documentary, *Ferguson Rises*, won an Audience Award at the Tribeca Film Festival and represented Independent Lens/PBS at the Television Critics Association. Noted film critic Kenneth Turan called *Ferguson Rises*, "excellent and impressive." Mobolaji is a Gotham/HBO Fellow and repped at UTA.

Chosen Fathers

Nonfiction Feature

Logline: An intimate and unflinching look at Black fathers navigating the trauma of losing a child to violence over the course of a week-long retreat.

Avril Speaks, Producer

Avril Speaks is an award-winning producer, director and showrunner based in Los Angeles. She has produced several award-winning films including *Jinn*, *Dotty & Soul*, and the South African film *African America*, which was nominated for an NAACP Image Award, four African Movie Academy Awards and streamed on Netflix. Most recently, Avril was the showrunner for the docuseries *Uprooted* which is available on Max and was an executive producer for *Files of the Unexplained*, coming soon to Netflix. Avril has been a Sundance Momentum Fellow, a recipient of the Dear Producer Award, and is also a co-founding member of Distribution Advocates.

Pure

Fiction Feature

Logline: For 17-year-old queer Celeste, senior year in her affluent Black community means following family tradition and becoming a debutante... but she longs for a different kind of coming out.

Monique Walton, Producer

Monique Walton is an independent producer. She is the 2024 recipient of the Film Independent Spirit Awards Producers Award. Walton's films include *Sing Sing* (dir. Greg Kwedar) which premiered at TIFF in 2023, and *Bull* (dir. Annie Silverstein), which premiered at Cannes - Un Certain Regard in 2019. She produced the feature documentary *Hollow Tree* (dir. Kira

Akerman), which premiered at the New Orleans Film Festival. Walton was a 2016 Sundance Creative Producing Fellow, a 2020 Rotterdam Producing Fellow, and a 2021 Cannes-Producers Network Fellow.

Anita

Fiction Feature

Logline: Desperate for a better life, ambitious Anita escapes her conservative town in India by orchestrating her own arranged marriage and moving to the U.S. But when her fierce pursuit of the American Dream threatens her marriage, she must confront the very life she escaped to achieve true independence.

Film Independent Artist Development programs promote unique, independent voices by helping filmmakers create and advance new work through Project Involve; Filmmaker Labs (Directing, Documentary, Episodic, Producing and Screenwriting); Fast Track finance market and Fiscal Sponsorship, as well as through Grants and Awards, which provide over one million dollars annually to visual storytellers.

For more information on any of the Labs or the projects that have been developed through Artist Development, please contact artistdevelopment@filmIndependent.org.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT

For over 40 years, Film Independent has helped filmmakers get their projects made and seen. The nonprofit organization's core mission is to champion creative independence in visual storytelling and support a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision.

In addition to producing the [Film Independent Spirit Awards](#), the organization supports creative professionals with Artist Development programs, grants and labs. Signature mentorship program [Project Involve](#) fosters the careers of talented filmmakers from underrepresented communities. Weekly Education events and workshops equip filmmakers of all ages and experience levels with tools and resources. [Global Media Makers](#), a cultural exchange program produced in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, provides career-building opportunities for international film professionals. And year-round screening series [Film Independent Presents](#) delivers monthly, unique cinematic experiences to Members in Los Angeles and beyond.

For more information or to become a Member, visit filmIndependent.org.

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