



LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY REPORT

SUMMER 2022

**2022 State of Women Identified
Film & Media Makers of Color in the
Philadelphia/Mid Atlantic Region**



Listen to What I Say Report

Navigating the Careers and Challenges of Independent Film/Media Making

This Survey is Funded by Members of SIFTMedia 215,
Philadelphia Assembly and Independence Public Media Foundation



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Introduction & Invitation

The goal of this report is to better understand the needs of Women of Color filmmakers and media makers who are from and/or currently call the Philadelphia region their home.

While numerous studies or reports have recently been conducted about the state of arts and culture in our region,⁵ and the state of women and girls in Philadelphia,⁶ there has not been a study that directly engages WOC filmmakers and media makers in our region. "Listen to What I Say" gives an account of the ways in which women of color filmmakers and media makers are navigating their obligations, responsibilities and personal well-being while seeking professional success.

This survey will provide recommendations to allies, stakeholders and funders on why it is important to support Women of Color film & media makers and how these efforts can produce a more equitable and diverse media ecosystem. When control of the media is shared, the stories we tell have a better chance of reflecting the truth and helping us all envision a better future.

This report serves as an **invitation to funders, stakeholders, allies and supporters** to come to the table prepared to listen, partner and strategize on plans with women of color film and media makers to enhance and sustain their lives, so as to enhance the sector and the region as a whole.

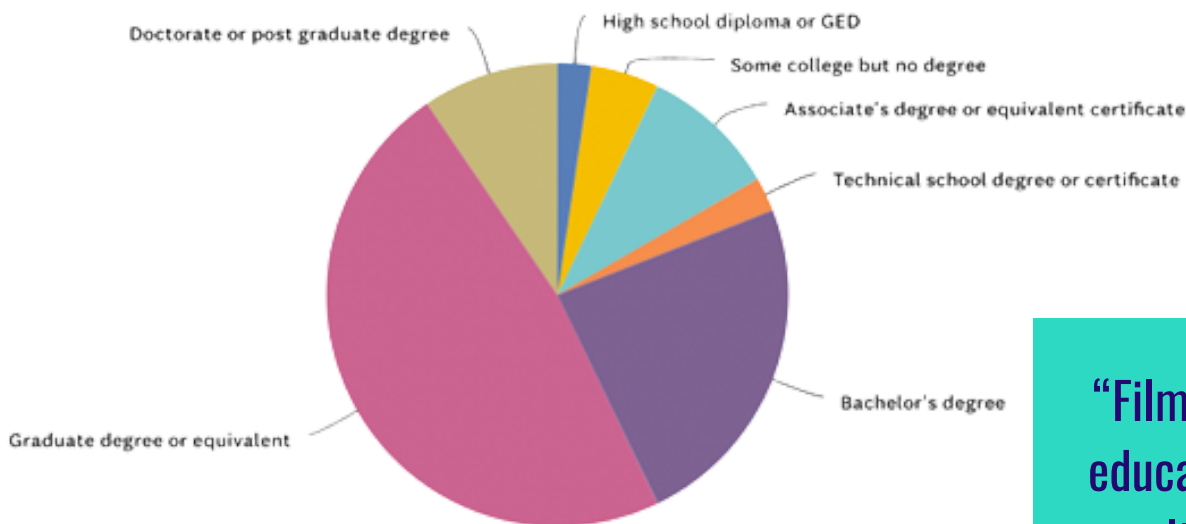
- **Eboni Zamani, Survey Architect**

To say that women of color filmmakers and media makers have been underrepresented in film and media would be a gross understatement. People of color makeup over 40% of the US population¹, yet the world of film, digital and TV are still struggling to reflect our current society. In television and digital, women of color as broadcast TV show creators, credited writers for broadcast, digital and cable scripted shows, leads/co-leads of shows fall between 9% -12% today². Of the top 252 Hollywood films released in 2021, 13% were written by women of color and only 9% were directed by women of color.³

In independent film and media spaces, similar struggles persist. At the 10 top film festivals in North America, including Tribeca, Toronto, Sundance and SXSW, only 12% of directors are women of color.⁴

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0



42%
also work
as
Educators

“Filmmaker, researcher,
educator, oral historian.
It's what I love.”

TRAINED AND UNDEREMPLOYED

Philadelphia is no exception to this problem. As one survey respondent put it, “Philly is a Boys Town and they need to open more doors to Black and Brown women and men.” The lack of diversity and inclusion in film and media spaces including Public Television, Cable & Broadcast Television, College & University Film/Media Departments, Local Production Houses- is palpable. Women of color, meaning Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, Bi-Racial, Multiracial & Multiethnic women, filmmakers and media makers are bearing the brunt of this inequity.

To date only one member of SIFT is currently employed as a full time professor at a local college. The rest serve as adjuncts. The lack of inclusion of People who identify as Black/Latinx in our higher education system is truly disturbing, and illustrates the discomfort that predominantly white institutions have with people of color in the region. We are often told we “are not a good fit”. Being a good “cultural” fit is a prerequisite for employment by primarily white institutions. And legacy hiring of white men and Affirmative Action for white women have created the current state of underemployment of people of color in tenured teaching posts. This systemic lack of opportunity, for people who have taken out student loans for degrees that yield no financial benefit, has financially impaired the economic stability and artistic output of most respondents.

27% believe their work is sustainable for another 2 years

51% are making between \$30,000-\$74,999 annually with 0-4 dependents

76% Are not in a Union/Guild or have never been in a Union/Guild

16% are Mid-Career, but still trying to make their first or second feature length project

“All the old films...white males got all the jobs.”

63% have encountered problems working in film & media because they are or identify as women

71% have encountered problems working in film & media because of their race and/or ethnicity

89% have not received any funding for their work from the City of Philadelphia;

Another 84% have never received resources, professional development support, business services, etc. from the City of Philadelphia

“I felt the City wasn't helping artists like other cities.”

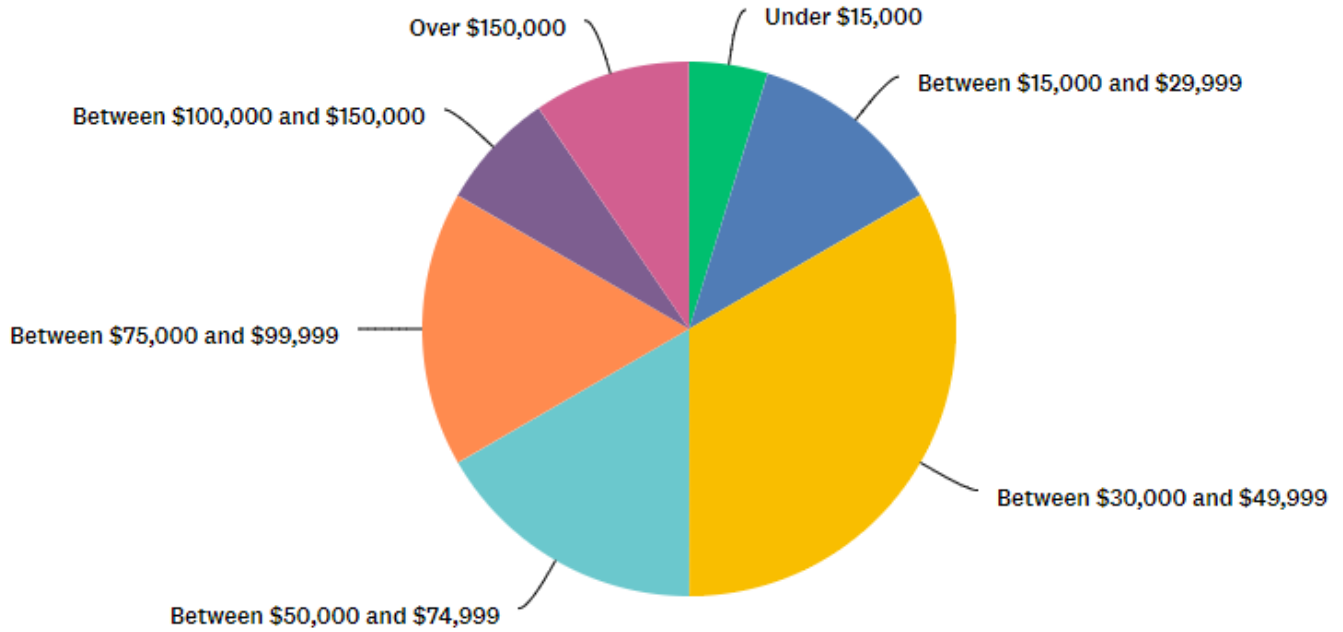
73% work in multiple positions or roles in film & media

29% currently have health issues

“My mother said art is for rich people.”

INCOME Half of respondents make less than \$50,000 per year.

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0



FUNDING BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY



During the three years since the 2019 formation of Sisters in Film & Television (SIFT) Media 215 Collective, members of the collective continue to advocate for increased BIPOC funding of individual artists and filmmakers in the region. The size and types of grants in the field has expanded to include small grants from the City of Philadelphia COVID 19 Arts Aid PHL Fund; IPMF film/media fellowships; Leeway Media Artist & Activist Residency; and Forman Arts/Philadelphia Foundation Art Works grants.

Overall, women of color film and media makers received more funding support from local funders, foundations and organizations than they did from national organizations or funders. While 51% of respondents have received funding from a national organization, foundation or fund, 76% have received funding from at least one organization, foundation or fund in the Greater Philadelphia region.

Here are the top three foundations for local artists/filmmakers:

COVID-19 Arts Aid PHL Fund

Grants to Artists: The fund made 977* grants to individual artists, totaling just over \$500,000.

Grants to Small Organizations: The fund made 251* grants of up to \$1,000 each to small arts organizations, totaling nearly \$250,000. Every eligible organization that applied received funding.

Leeway Foundation

makes grants based on open rolling deadlines from \$1000 to \$15,000 for individual artists.

Independence Public Media Foundation [IPMF]

has open calls for proposals and a rotating nominating committee for fellowships, with grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$75,000 for individual artist projects.

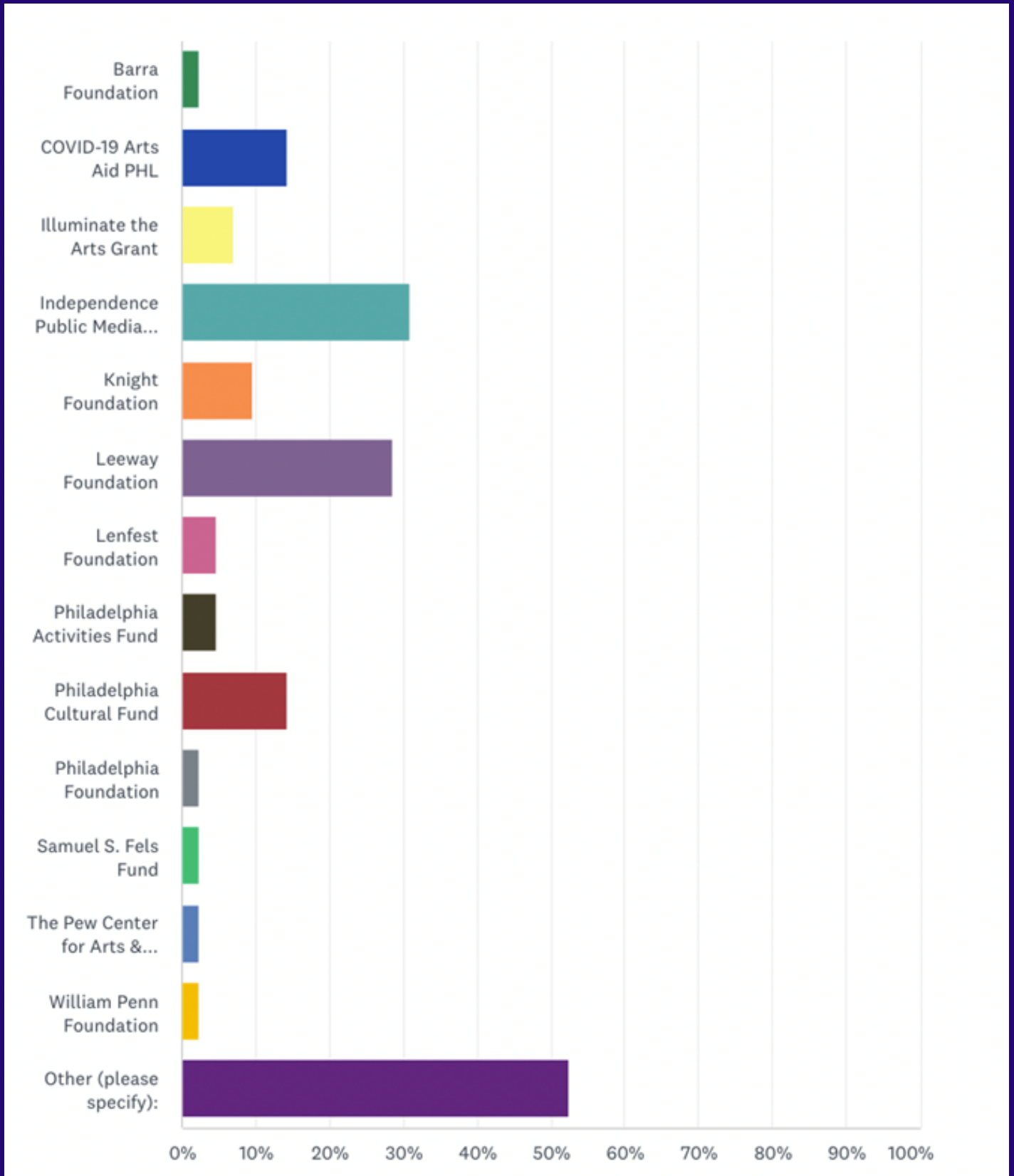
“Not having a sustaining income source means that I do not have full control of my own time to devote to my career full time.”

“I’d love to be able to fund one of my scripts, where I could be living in it.”

HAVE YOU RECEIVED LOCAL GRANT FUNDING?



Answered: 42 Skipped: 0



Survey Overview

The survey was designed to evaluate personal and professional experiences of women of color film and media makers in and from the Greater Philadelphia region.

The survey was conducted over the course of three months and distributed online, including SIFT's website, social media channels and email newsletters, via a Survey Monkey link. It was also sent directly to various film and media organizations, collectives and supporting institutions for redistribution.

Focus Group

One focus group was held in May 2022. A moderator led the three hour long hybrid (virtual conferencing and in-person) discussion with five participants to deep dive into the issues of the survey and to share their personal and professional experiences.

61% of respondents are a member of SIFT, affiliated with SIFT or have attended a SIFT event or workshop.

Over 60% of respondents have Graduate Degrees - MA, MS, MFA, JD, PHD

88% respondents identified as women

18% of participants also identified as non-binary and gender fluid people.

10% of respondents are disabled.

There is at least 2% participation from every racial/ethnic group except for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander.

42 respondents completed the survey. A variety of women of color in film and media completed the survey. Participants ranged from filmmakers to digital media producers to writers to sound recordists. Almost three-quarters of respondents held two or more positions in film and media. Most often respondents identified as filmmakers and one or more film or media professionals, i.e., educator, podcaster or producer.

National Funding Sources:

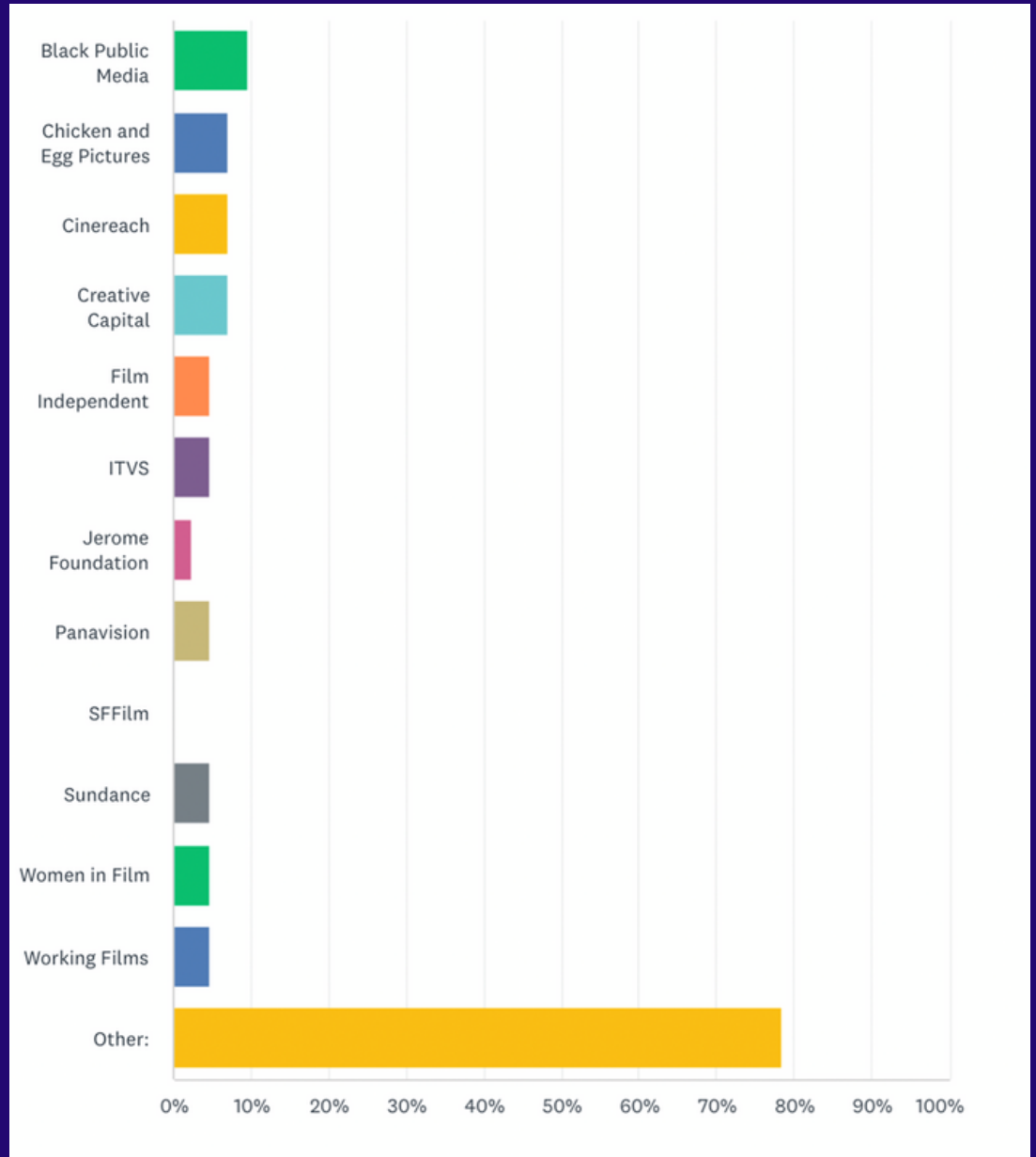
Top 4 sources include:

Black Public Media
4 respondents

Chicken & Egg
3 respondents

Cinereach -
3 respondents

Creative Capital
3 respondents



“There was a lot of Queer and Black filmmaking in the 80’s ... in Philly”

Other Funding Sources

73% of respondents receive support from family and personal community (friends, neighbors, co-workers) via limited financial support, child/dependent care support, in-person event attendance and social media sharing

68% of respondents receive support from peers via barter of services, emotional support, donations to projects and the sharing of resources



Sustainability:

Maintaining stable and viable careers in film and media has been a challenge for many women of color in the region.

50% of respondents are making between \$15,000 and \$49,000.

This places women of color filmmakers in these income brackets in the 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Level.⁷

This also places women of color film and media makers in the region, within the city's 25.8% percent poverty rate.⁶

Respondents are split almost equally in half about the sustainability of their work and careers. Self-care routines and rituals, moral and financial support from family and personal community, some peer support and mentorship are helping women of color film and media makers maintain their personal well-being and professional careers.

However, FT/PT job schedules conflicting with film & media work, lack of support resources for projects, work/life imbalance, lack of career promotion and lack of partial or full funding for projects top the list of concerns for unsustainable work practices for women of color.⁸

Almost all participants in the survey agreed that more could and should be done for women of color film & media makers in the region.

Their responses ranged from increased funding options to increased resource access to opportunity expansion and community building.

“We’ve been connectors for each other through small arts and cultural — filmmaking organizations in the city. We’ve been keeping each other working and together.”

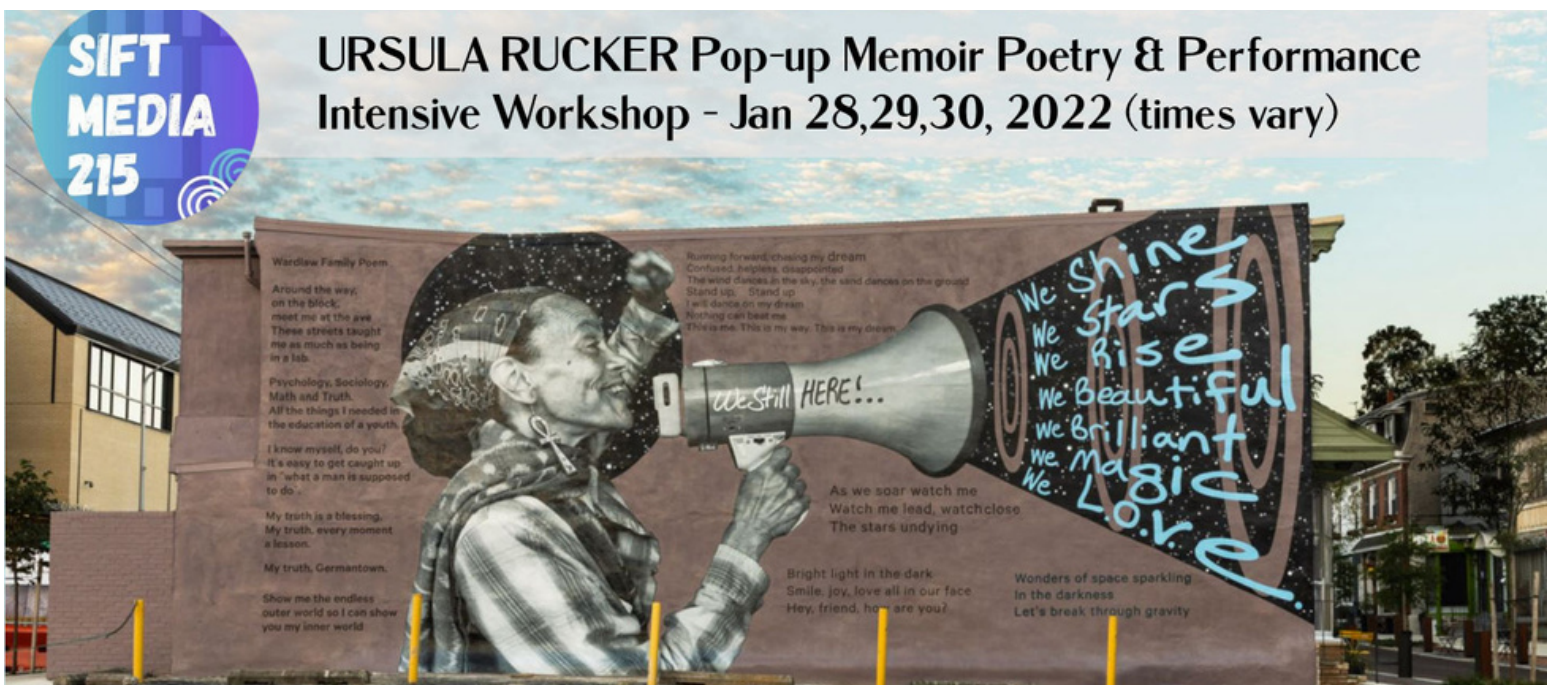
Collaborative Work/Collective Action:

Despite all of the challenges women of color film and media makers are facing, they have been able to make gains by way of collaborative work with peers and the collective action of their personal support systems.

Women of color film and media makers have also been a main source of support, opportunity and resource exchange of one another.

Women of color filmmakers are more likely to be featured in film festivals that are programmed by women of color.⁴

Women of color artists and arts & culture organization heads, including women of color in film and media have most often paid, supported and backed the work of women of color film and media makers locally.



This intensive word/ thought/ emotion, self-truth-culling, seeks to be a journey of healing, art, therapy, and authentic conversations ...



MENTORSHIP

Immediate support for the creation and maintenance of paid mentorship programs run and/or led by women of color.

While only 46% of respondents have a mentor and 24% have had a mentor at times, mentorships have been positive, growth experiences for women of color film and media makers in and from the region.

56% are mentoring currently

76% want to mentor in the next 1-3 years

“We have to bring young people along. Teach ourselves and then share it with them.”

The Documentary History Project for Youth



The Documentary History Project for Youth is an annual after-school, weekend and summertime digital media production workshop for middle and high school students. Each year, youth participants create short documentary films as a way to explore some aspect of the social, political and cultural history of Philadelphia. This year's theme is "A New Philadelphia" inviting participants to envision what Philadelphia should be in the post-pandemic era.



SIFTER Erica Hawkins is giving back to the next generation, as a Facilitator for Scribe Video Center's

THE DOCUMENTARY HISTORY PROJECT FOR YOUTH



“Everyone’s connected...(Philly) has very intimate community and support.”



FUNDING

Immediate, unrestricted financial relief via Philadelphia's \$1.4 billion funding from the American Rescue Plan Act;⁹

Extend the Illuminate the Arts Grant for an additional year via ARPA funding.⁹

The Illuminate the Arts Grant was the sixth top contributor of funding for women of color film and media makers in the region

Build pipelines via networking opportunities; a local template for film/arts grant applications; film exhibitions for women of color film and media makers to engage and gain more access to national funders.

Of the major national funders, Black Public Media was the biggest contributor to women of color film and media makers and that support only reached 11% of respondents.

Build out a permanent funding source for film and media with a portion of that fund allocated to women of color film and media makers.

Potential models for funding film and media as a part of permanent funding for the overall arts and culture sector exist within the state of Pennsylvania, in the Pittsburgh region.⁵

A small number of respondents have received funding support for their work from Pittsburgh and the amounts were greater than the support they received in the Philadelphia region.

66% of respondents said that capital would help them get to the next level of their career or to the next stage of their projects in 6 months to 1 year

“When Julie Dash came out with *Daughters of the Dust* I was floored ... I thought it was the greatest film... I thought, “If they don’t love Julie Dash, how can I make it?”



FUNDING

Expand and make permanent the Philadelphia Cultural Fund.

The Cultural Fund has been a major source of funding and support for women of color in film and media.

Increase funding amounts for film and media projects.

A \$1 Million budget film or media project is considered to be low-budget.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Immediate support for women of color film and media artists, creative businesses, film & media non-profits and professional development services that are co-created and co-led by women of color.

This includes:

- Physical spaces that are stand alone or spaces carved out in existing institutions
- Programmatic creation and maintenance
- Business, non-profit support services and funding
- Artist & professional development funding and services

These are among the top infrastructure asks and demands of women of color film and media makers to sustain their art and creative work.

Despite the millions of dollars poured into the city's largest non-profit media arts institutions, very little money is trickling down to women of color professionals in media.

“More infrastructure for media makers and more pipelines into commercial spaces where there is plenty of money”



44% of respondents said that business support services would help them get to the next level of their career or to the next stage of their projects in 6 months to 1 year

22% of respondents said that non-profit support services would help them get to the next level of their career or the next stage of their projects

48% of respondents said that artist services and professional development would help them get to the next level of their career or the next stage of their projects in 6 months to 1 year

EXPANSION & ACCESS to better quality of life services from the City of Philadelphia, surrounding counties, local & national foundations.

Women of color in film and media are in need of assistance, support and opportunities such as affordable housing for artists, food security, safety and expanded arts education and teaching opportunities.

WOC have been systemically locked out of decision making positions and institutions since the mid 1990's. When funding comes through for programming it usually passes through a filter of white professionals and Black gatekeepers, who receive the bulk of funds meant to support “Black and Brown local filmmakers”. Local men of color are also not receiving funding for work, and most have given up even trying to apply for grants.

The phenomenon of white filmmakers parachuting in, gaining funding for films about communities of color, and then hiring white crews to do the work is real. Getting local foundations to see the value in supporting filmmakers of color who have committed to making Philadelphia their home is a continuous struggle.

Many of the survey participants are also business owners and non-profit founders or operators. This is because as several respondents noted, it is easier to brand or find support for a business or non-profit than it is to find support as an individual film artist.

“For the impact to be sustainable ...we will need a long term pipeline into spaces that support distribution, marketing and revenue generation (via ownership of our intellectual property and creativity).”



COLLABORATIONS, COLLECTIVES, PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between large organizations and institutions with new and/or small women of color creative businesses and production companies to provide 3 years of free Fiscal Sponsorship.

An increase in local labs, fellowships, diversity training programs geared toward people of color in film and media that are new or emerging in the field, managed by POC.

34% of respondents are emerging (3-10 years) in their careers.

Uplift POC led and multicultural organizations such as: cinéSPEAK, The Colored Girls Museum, Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival, and Philadelphia Latino American Film Festival.

These organizations and festivals have been main sources of support for women of color film and media makers in and from the region.

Finance the creation and expansion of new and emerging Women of Color led organizations like ¡Presente! Media, 5 Shorts Project, Lil Filmmakers, and Love Now Media.

When women of color are at the helm of film and media projects they are more likely to make diverse hires and create multicultural work environments and ecosystems.³



Conclusion



Between 2016-2020... \$350,000,000* poured into the Philadelphia Metropolitan region's Community Media Ecosystem from various funders. Only a pittance is managed by and for Black and Latinx Communities.¹⁰

We are in a state of emergency and have been for some time. We need to keep WOC filmmakers and media makers working and sustained.

“My gift as an educator was to put everything into the ARTS.”

Women of color film and media makers are phenomenal. They have persisted despite other's perceptions, lack of support, work/life imbalance and more. WOC in film and media are looking for and demanding their fair share of the film and media sector, while continuing to support and uplift one another, themselves and their communities.

**“Right now I give myself permission ...
the space to do the work and gain the skills right where I am.”**

We had women like **Toni Cade Bambara** and **Ntozake Shange** in our region, teaching, mentoring, working, creating—who, after their passing are now considered to be among the greats in film, media, theater and literature. Let's support the WOC in the region now who are socially conscious and relevant artists.

Survey Credits



STUDY ARCHITECT/RESEARCHER: **Eboni Zamani** is a photographer, filmmaker and writer hailing from Philadelphia. She received her degree in Film & Screen Studies and African American Studies from Pace University. She served as a member of the Task Force on Arts & Culture for the City of Philadelphia. She is currently writing, producing and directing film and media projects via her production company, Pearl's Girl Productions.

STUDY DESIGNER: **LeAnne Lindsay** is SIFTMedia's Social Media Manager, a member of the Philadelphia Film Critics Circle, A Nominator for Theatre Philadelphia's Barrymore Awards and is Editor of Philly based movie and arts entertainment site Tinsel & Tine.

COVER ART: This image is from the upcoming COVID1619 PROJECT called "We, The Artists" by filmmaker **Melissa Beatriz**. Her concept is realized by animator and illustrator **Gabrielle Patterson**.

INSERT IMAGES: **Photographic Images** are from SIFTMedia 215 website and social media platforms 2019 to 2022. **Data Graphs** are screen shots from Survey Monkey.

STUDY PRODUCER: **Nadine Patterson** is a founding member of SIFT and works as the Resource Strategist for the collective. She's been making independent womanist films for over 30 years. She earned her masters degrees at West Chester University and London Film School. Through her production company Harmony Image Productions (HipCinema) she is developing a dramatic mini-series on the great inventor  Lewis Latimer.

FISCAL CONDUIT: Extended Play Inc. 501 c (3)

Citations

The numbers below are referenced via superscripts in the survey - Not by order of appearance

1. Inequality Across 1500 Popular Films: Examining Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Leads/Co leads from 2007 to 2021 Report, USC Annenberg School
2. Hollywood Diversity Report 2021: Pandemic in Progress, Part 2: Television, UCLA College of Social Sciences
3. Hollywood Diversity Report 2022: A New, Post-Pandemic Normal? Part 1: Film, UCLA College of Social Sciences
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5. City of Philadelphia Arts and Culture Taskforce Final Findings Report March 2021, The Arts and Culture Taskforce & Office of Council member Isaiah Thomas
6. The State of Women and Girls of Philadelphia 2017 Report, The City of Philadelphia
7. Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines, Federal Register: The Daily Journal of the United State Government. January 2022
8. Race & Ethnicity in Independent Films: Prevalence of Underrepresented Directors and the Barriers They Face 2013, USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, ArtWorks & NEA
9. How Philadelphia Plans to Use Its American Rescue Plan Dollars, Compared with Other Cities 2022. The Pew Charitable Trusts
10. Community Media Across the Greater Philadelphia Area: A Needs Assessment and a Call to Action, Independence Public Media Foundation. 2021, p. 36* (\$350m researched findings), p. 28 (98% of named funding went to 6.4% of population)

Thank you for your time and attention.
For questions and follow up please contact:

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