

NYWIFT || New York Women in Film & Television

For Immediate Release:

New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) presents “2019 NYWIFT Summit: Inclusion, Equality and Safety” at the Ford Foundation for Social Justice



Conversation 1: Sexual Harassment / Safety: (from left): Jericka Duncan, Amber Tamblyn, Leslie Silva and Sharyn Tejani (photo credit: John Dallas Phelps)

NEW YORK, NY – July 2, 2019 – New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) presented its first annual NYWIFT Summit on June 27th, 2019 from 4-8 PM, hosted by the Ford Foundation for Social Justice (320 East 43rd Street) with 175 film and television industry stakeholders in attendance. The theme for 2019 was Inclusion, Equality and Safety in the workplace for women working in the media industry.

“We saw that NYWIFT was needed now more than ever, to raise our collective voice on issues that are vital for working women. We’ve been taking stock and mining what initiatives are being rolled out; how the networks, studios and agencies are responding and listening to our community of women across the industry,” said NYWIFT Board President Simone Pero in her opening remarks. “The Summit is somewhat of a pause and is meant to engage in gathering information and generating new ideas and approaches both individually and collectively.”

The event marked the launch of a new advocacy initiative to bring together some of the most unique and diverse voices of women working to create better labor conditions for women working in the entertainment industry. “There is a difference between a movement – a gathering of people with specific intentions to create social change– and actual measurable progress,” said NYWIFT Executive

Director Cynthia Lopez. “I am thrilled that every woman who spoke here today exemplified and embodied the best of both movement *and* progress in our industry.”

As part of this new initiative, NYWIFT’s goal is to develop a briefing summary of the Summit that would include case studies, interviews, best practices and a bibliography of local, state and national resources.

Cara Mertes (Director, JustFilms, Ford Foundation), **Cynthia Lopez** (Executive Director, NYWIFT), and **Simone Pero** (Producer; President, NYWIFT Board of Directors) gave opening remarks and **Roberta Reardon** (Commissioner, New York State Department of Labor) presented the keynote. NYWIFT Board Member **Kathryn O’Kane** (Producer and Director; Showrunner of *Salt Fat Acid Heat*) was one of the key organizers of the Summit and emceed the proceedings.

The Summit was organized in to three panels, one per issue, with industry thought leaders and journalists discussing challenges and solutions before opening the floor for audience questions. In **Conversation 1: Sexual Harassment / Safety**, speakers defined sexual harassment in its many forms and highlighted programs and laws that work toward creating a safer work environment. Panelists included **Leslie Silva** (Actress, Founding Member of TIME’S UP); **Amber Tamblyn** (Author, Actress and Director, Founding Member of TIME’S UP); and **Sharyn Tejani** (Director, TIME’S UP Legal Defense Fund). **Jericka Duncan** (National Correspondent, *CBS This Morning*) moderated. A few weeks prior to the Summit, Silva and other TIME’S UP Members had successfully lobbied to pass the TIME’S UP NY Safety Agenda which extends the statutes of limitations for second- and third-degree rape in New York State.

The dialogue in **Conversation 2: Diversity/Inclusion** focused on representation and gender equality matters and provided examples of initiatives to implement a more diverse intersectional environment. The panelists were **Christina Norman** (Creative Executive, Creative Advisor to Level Forward) and **Radha Blank** (Performer/Writer/Director/Producer for TV, Stage and Film), and **Danielle C. Belton** (Editor-in-Chief, *The Root*) moderated. Finally, **Conversation 3: Pay Equity** examined the extent of the gender pay gap in the film and television industry and highlighted programs, incentives and campaigns that work toward equity. The conversation with **Beverly Cooper Neufeld** (President, PowHer New York) and **Rebecca Damon** (Executive Vice President and New York Local President SAG-AFTRA) was moderated by **Lori Sokol** (Ph.D., Executive Director and Editor-in-Chief, *Women’s eNews*).

A clip from the forthcoming documentary *This Changes Everything*, which addresses gender discrimination both onscreen and off, closed out the program, followed by a reception and lively conversation among audience members about the issues at hand. Attendees were encouraged to sign up for more information about NYWIFT’s Advocacy Committee in the coming weeks, as the organization cultivates a team dedicated to progress.

For more information about New York Women in Film & Television’s initiatives please visit www.nywift.org.

ABOUT NYWIFT

New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) advocates for equality in the moving image industry and supports women in every stage of their careers. As the preeminent entertainment industry association for women in New York, NYWIFT energizes women by illuminating their achievements, presenting training and professional development programs, awarding scholarships and grants, and providing access to a supportive community of peers. NYWIFT brings together nearly 2,500 women

and men working both above and below the line. NYWIFT is part of a network of 50 women in film chapters worldwide, representing more than 15,000 members. NYWIFT is a nonprofit 501c3 public charity.

For more information visit www.nywift.org.

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