

**EMBARGOED FOR MONDAY AUGUST 3rd at 11:30AM ET, PLEASE**

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**THE WRITERS LAB for WOMEN SCREENWRITERS OVER 40  
SELECTS 12 PARTICIPANTS FOR  
VIRTUAL SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT LAB IN 2020**

**2020 LAB WILL PIVOT FROM IN PERSON RETREAT TO  
VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE**

**Submissions Up 25%**

**"I'm excited by this year's inclusive group of women screenwriters and the diversity of their stories. I look forward to seeing these films - from science fiction to horror, mystery to westerns - come to fruition. The more women's stories we see, the more women are empowered." - Nicole Kidman**

New York, NY – August 3, 2020 – **The Writers Lab** is pleased to announce the selected 12 participants its most inclusive class ever, with half its winners identifying as diverse, and half its projects identifying as “genre” for its 2020 script development lab. For 2020, its sixth year, rather than a physical retreat, The Writers Lab will pivot and build a rich virtual experience for its twelve winning writers with intensified focus on pushing drafts across the finish line. Additionally, in 2020, The Writers Lab extends its support to its entire pool of applicants with new online resources, including podcasts and recorded talks with lab mentors and supporters, curated links, and more.

Launched in 2015, the program is the only lab in the world devoted exclusively to script development for women writers over the age of 40. The Lab is produced by co-founders **Elizabeth Kaiden** and **Nitza Wilon** and **New York Women in Film & Television**, and supported by **Meryl Streep**, **Nicole Kidman**, and **Oprah Winfrey**.

In these shifting, challenging times, audiences are savvier, and hungrier for new perspectives, especially narratives shaped by women. Amidst the global pandemic, submissions to The Writers Lab for women over 40 went up by 25%. Clearly, demand persists for this dynamic, prolific network of industry veterans and ground-breaking creatives that launches the work of women screenwriters in their prime.

**The 12 participants of The Writers Lab 2020 are:**

**Nichole Abshire**, *Imposter Impersonator* (family dramedy)

**Charlotte, Cameron**, *Throw Money* (thriller)

**Elisa Greven**, *Silent Spring* (science biopic)

**Joey Day Hargrove**, *Highway to Heck* (comedy)

**Christine Hoang**, *Fly Girl* (comedy)

**Christine Autrand Mitchell**, *The Field* (horror)

**Carolyn Saunders**, *Island West* (sci-fi)

**Kelly Yoon Strathmore**, *Wing and A Prayer* (coming of age)

**Barbara Ward Thall**, *Little Sister* (western)

**Victoria Thomas**, *Street Food* (drama)

**Sandy Thomson**, *A Sharp Arrow* (historical thriller)

**Julie Zografos**, *Dark Quarry* (mystery)

The Writers Lab also announced an expanded roster of influential, experienced filmmakers to mentor participants in development sessions, panels, and story-breaking workshops. Mentors include producers **Anne Carey** (*Can You Ever Forgive Me?*), **Susan Cartsonis** (*What Women Want*), **Shruti Ganguly** (*The Color of Time*), **Mary Jane Skalski** (*Hello I Must Be Going*), **Frida Torresblanco** (*Pan's Labyrinth*), **Jamie Zelermyer** (NYWIFT Board President and former Focus Features VP), and screenwriters **Mara Brock Akil** (*The Game*), **Pamela Gray** (*A Walk on the Moon*), **Lisa Jones** (*Disappearing Acts*), **Gina Prince-Bythewood** (*Beyond the Lights*), **Theresa Rebeck** (*355*), **Robin Swicord** (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*), and **Pat Verducci** (*True Crime*).

"I'm excited by this year's inclusive group of women screenwriters and the diversity of their stories. I look forward to seeing these films - from science fiction to horror, mystery to westerns - come to fruition. The more women's stories we see, the more women are empowered." stated Lab supporter **Nicole Kidman**

"Now more than ever, we must all answer the call to be more inclusive, to reflect the totality of human experience," said **The Writers Lab co-founder Elizabeth Kaiden**.

"Despite the challenges this industry is facing, the appetite for fresh, smart content is growing, and we have a proven track record for finding stellar storytellers to meet that demand," added **The Writers Lab co-founder Nitza Wilon**.

"The challenges of COVID-19 also offer tremendous opportunities to collaborate creatively and explore new ways to engage with the writers," said **New York Women in Film & Television Executive Director Cynthia Lopez**. "NYWIFT remains committed to supporting The Writers Lab participants throughout their careers and we look forward to exploring these new virtual experiences together."

Partners include the Writers Guild of America, East, The Black List, Falco Ink, Film Fatales, Filmmarket Hub, Relativity Ventures, Roadmap Writers, Stony Brook Manhattan Center for

Creative Writing & Film, and Untamed Stories. A special thank you to Final Draft for their product contribution.

### **ABOUT THE WRITERS LAB**

Founded by Kyle Stokes with Elizabeth Kaiden and Nitza Wilon, and produced with New York Women in Film & Television, The Writers Lab is dedicated to developing narrative feature screenplays written by diverse women over the age of 40. We are industry veterans who elevate the work of women screenwriters in their prime through mentorship, advocacy and exposure.

#### About The Writers Lab Mentors

The 2020 mentors include:

- **Mara Brock Akil** Writer-Producer (*The Game, Being Mary Jane, Love Is*)
- **Anne Carey** Producer (*Diary of a Teenage Girl, 20th Century Women, Can You Ever Forgive Me?*)
- **Susan Cartsonis**: A top grossing producer (*What Women Want, Where the Heart Is, The Duff, Carrie Pilby*)
- **Pamela Gray**: Writer (*A Walk on the Moon, Music of the Heart, Conviction*)
- **Shruti Ganguly**: Award-winning producer, writer and director (*The Color of Time, Initials S.G.*)
- **Lisa Jones**: Author and Screenwriter (*Disappearing Acts, The Wedding*)
- **Gina Prince-Bythewood** Writer-Director (*Beyond the Lights, Love and Basketball*)
- **Theresa Rebeck**: Playwright, Screenwriter (Jessica Chastain's upcoming *355, Trouble, Catwoman*), Television Writer, Novelist
- **Mary Jane Skalski**: Producer (*Hello I Must Be Going, The Visitor, The Station Agent*)
- **Robin Swicord**: Academy Award nominated screenwriter (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*) whose work includes *Memoirs of a Geisha, Little Women* and others
- **Frida Torresblanco**: Award-winning producer (*Pan's Labyrinth, Disobedience*)
- **Pat Verducci**: Writer-Director (*True Crime*), Professor, Script Editor, Story Consultant
- **Jamie Zelermyer**: Producer (Focus Features, *Boys Don't Cry, Before/During/After*)

### **ABOUT NEW YORK WOMEN IN FILM & TELEVISION (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](http://www.nywift.org).

Follow on all social platforms @NYWIFT / #NYWIFT

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