



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**NEW YORK WOMEN IN FILM & TELEVISION ANNOUNCES NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS
PRESIDENT LESLIE FIELDS-CRUZ**

The accomplished public media executive succeeds President Jamie Zelermyer and is joined by a diverse group of new and returning film and television industry leaders

NEW YORK, NY – September 21, 2022 – New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) is pleased to announce the appointment of its new Board of Directors President, Leslie Fields-Cruz. Fields-Cruz has served on the NYWIFT board for four years including stints as the Vice President of Programming and of Membership. Fields-Cruz has been the Executive Director of Black Public Media since 2014, where she is focused on growing BPM’s resources to enable it to support more stories about the Black experience. She started at BPM in 2001 managing grant making activities that supported the production and development of documentary programs for PBS. By 2005, she was the Director of Programming, leading the distribution of all funded programs to public television. In 2008, with six independent titles in need of a public television broadcast, Leslie launched *AfroPoP: The Ultimately Cultural Exchange*, a documentary series highlighting the variety and depth of the global black experience.

“We are thrilled to have Leslie Fields-Cruz lead NYWIFT into its next era of advocacy for inclusion, equity, diversity, and safety in the film and television industry. Her extensive background in public media and longtime commitment to positive change will make her an astute, creative, and forward-thinking leader of our organization,” said NYWIFT Executive Director Cynthia Lopez.

“As Jamie Zelermyer hands me the leadership baton for the next leg of NYWIFT’s journey, I am honored and energized to work with our exceptional leader, Cynthia Lopez, and to continue serving an organization and a membership equally committed to the ideals of ensuring equity and inclusion for women in the film and television industry and the growing immersive media sector,” said new NYWIFT Board President Leslie Fields-Cruz.

Fields-Cruz succeeds former President Jamie Zelermyer. Zelermyer is an accomplished film and television producer and former VP, Physical Production at Focus Features. Most recently, Zelermyer was the executive producer, creator, and host of the hit podcast *I Was Never There*, which premiered at the 2022 Tribeca Festival. The podcast follows her personal exploration of the counterculture movement of her childhood and mysterious disappearance of a family friend. Zelermyer served three years as NYWIFT’s president. Highlights of her administration included NYWIFT’s 40th anniversary Muse Awards in 2019 and NYWIFT’s first-ever official in-person programming at the Sundance Film Festival in 2020. Zelermyer also oversaw NYWIFT’s transition to a fully virtual programming and administrative model during the COVID-19 pandemic, which included two virtual Muse Awards programs, two Creative Workforce Summits, three Institutes, two publications, 107 NYWIFT Talks, 15 Virtual Hangouts, and 104 Industry Screenings.

“We are so grateful to Jamie Zelermyer for her steadfast leadership, especially during such a turbulent time,” said NYWIFT Executive Director Cynthia Lopez. “Her intelligence, warmth, good humor, and ability to adapt helped NYWIFT not only survive but thrive during COVID, opening us

up to the expanding possibilities of virtual and hybrid programming that will make for an exciting future.”

NYWIFT is also pleased to announce the results of the 2022 Board of Directors election. Five spots on the board have been filled, with three new members and two returning members:

New Board Members:

- **Kia Brooks:** Kia Brooks is the Deputy Director of The Gotham Film and Media Institute. Brooks created The Gotham’s Owing It program that supports women and non-binary media makers and entrepreneurs who break boundaries in the media and entertainment industry, and developed the Expanding Communities program, which provides resources, community space, and industry access to individuals with Disabilities and BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ creators. Brooks’s experience in strategic communications and events includes roles at Focus Features, Oscilloscope Laboratories, and Tribeca Film Festival.
- **Shruti Ganguly:** Shruti Ganguly is a filmmaker and writer based between New York and Oslo. Ganguly was a member of the Obama Administration’s ECCO committee of 30 leaders and creators in entertainment, chairing its Asian Caucus, and is on the Creative Council for Emily’s List. She has produced films that have premiered at Sundance, Venice, Tribeca, Telluride, and Berlin, and is currently writing for *Secret Daughter* for Amazon Studios, which will star Priyanka Chopra and Sienna Miller.
- **Emelyn Stuart:** Emelyn Stuart is the owner and founder of Stuart Cinema & Café in Brooklyn, which in addition to being a screening space will offer distribution deals to independent filmmakers and be a resource hub for artists. She was named Best Producer at LA Web Fest for her series *12 Steps to Recovery*, and her feature *Life Is Too Short* premiered to sold out audiences in New York during its debut screening and in 2017 it was awarded Best Feature Film domestically and internationally at various film festivals.

Returning Board Members:

- **Gretchen McGowan:** Gretchen McGowan is an award-winning producer and the head of production for Goldcrest Features in New York City where she oversees titles such as *Carol*, *Mojave*, *What Breaks the Ice*, *Carrie Pilby* and *To Olivia*. Gretchen has collaborated with Sebastian Junger on five films, and she is now producing *Hell of a Cruise* for NBCUniversal, a feature documentary about the cruise industry’s handling of Covid-19.
- **Zenaida Mendez:** Zenaida Mendez is the Director of Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN) El Barrio Firehouse Community Media Center and was recently awarded the 2022 Jewell Ryan White Award for Cultural Diversity from the Alliance of Community Media. Mendez has an extensive career in public service, community activism, television production, and filmmaking, and is currently the executive producer of several monthly MNN productions.

As a non-profit 501c3 public charity, NYWIFT is governed by a board of directors elected by the membership. Board members serve on committees in the areas of Development, Membership, Communications, Programming, Special Events, and Advocacy and Education.

###

[LINK TO DOWNLOAD IMAGES](#)

###

About New York Women in Film & Television:

New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) connects, educates, and advocates for women to accelerate diversity in media. 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 more than 2,500 women and men working both above and below the line. NYWIFT is part of a network of 60 women in film organizations worldwide, representing more than 15,000 members. NYWIFT is a nonprofit 501c3 public charity.

More information can be found online at: www.NYWIFT.org.

Follow on all social media platforms @NYWIFT.

About the NYWIFT Board Members:

Leslie Fields-Cruz (NYWIFT Board President) started at Black Public Media, formerly National Black Programming Consortium, in 2001 managing grant making activities that supported the production and development of documentary programs for PBS. By 2005, she was the Director of Programming, leading the distribution of all funded programs to public television. In 2008, with six independent titles in need of a public television broadcast, Fields-Cruz launched *AfroPoP: The Ultimately Cultural Exchange*, a documentary series highlighting the variety and depth of the global black experience. *AfroPoP* has garnered several awards and is the only national public television series focused solely on stories from the black experience. In the fall of 2014, Fields-Cruz became BPM's third Executive Director. Though she keeps the pulse on the development of program content and its distribution across public media platforms, she is focused on growing BPM's resources to enable it to support more stories about the Black experience.

Kia Brooks is the Deputy Director of The Gotham Film and Media Institute. Her experience in strategic communications (including PR and Marketing) and events spans over a decade and she enjoys supporting and advising creators and entrepreneurs in taking the next steps in their projects and careers. At The Gotham, she oversees the organization's programming, communications and supports the organization's development efforts. Brooks is the founder of The Gotham's Owning It program that supports women and non-binary media makers and entrepreneurs who break boundaries in the media and entertainment industry. She also developed the Expanding Communities program, which is dedicated to providing resources, a community space, and industry access to individuals with Disabilities and Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and LGBTQIA+ creators across film, TV, and audio industries. Through partnerships with organizations aligned with uplifting historically excluded voices, the program acts as a platform for both creators and organizations to reach new audiences, develop networks of potential collaborators, and access career advancement resources and opportunities within the media and entertainment industry.

Previous to working at the Gotham, Brooks worked in film publicity for companies such as Focus Features, Oscilloscope Laboratories and Tribeca Film Festival. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Communication from American University and is currently enrolled in a Fundraising Certificate Program at New York University.

Shruti Ganguly is a filmmaker and writer based between New York City and Oslo. Shruti was a member of the Obama Administration's ECCO committee of 30 leaders and creators in entertainment, chairing its Asian Caucus, and is on the Creative Council for Emily's List. She has produced several feature and short films (including Spirit-winner *H.*, and the Nora Ephron Prize-winner *Initials SG*) that have premiered at Sundance, Venice, Tribeca, Telluride, and Berlin. Ganguly is currently writing for *Secret Daughter* for Amazon Studios, which will star Priyanka Chopra and Sienna Miller, directed by Cannes-winner Anthony Chen. Ganguly developed and will EP *Flossy*, a half-hour comedy with writer/comedian Kerry Coddett, and EP Robin Thede, set up at Warner Bros and Showtime, and she will be an EP and writer on the half-hour TV series *Brown Baby*, which is in development with Bad Robot/Warner Bros and will star Himesh Patel. Ganguly has directed and produced commercials, short and feature docs, music videos and branded content, ranging from clients like Nike, Netflix, Michael Kors, MUNCH, and so on, through her production company honto88. In addition, Ganguly started Prism Entertainment with producers Megha Kadakia and Priya Giri Desai to focus on high-quality, South Asian-focused film and TV content. Previously, Ganguly worked at NYLON, MTV, and Conde Nast, producing the Clio-winning *73 Questions* series. She is a co-founder of the Resistance Revival Chorus, a collective born out of the Women's March that brings together artists and activists to use music and joy as an act of resistance. Ganguly is a published writer (*Nevertheless We Persisted*, Penguin) and a contributing writer for *The Juggernaut*. Ganguly received her Bachelor's degree from Northwestern University, and went to NYU's dual MFA/MBA program at Tisch and Stern. She hails from India, by way of Oman.

Gretchen McGowan is an award-winning producer and the head of production for Goldcrest Features in New York City where she oversees titles such as *Carol*, *Mojave*, *What Breaks the Ice*, *Carrie Pilby* and *To Olivia*. Gretchen has collaborated with Sebastian Junger on five films, and she is now producing *Hell of a Cruise* for NBCUniversal, a feature documentary about the cruise industry's handling of Covid-19. Gretchen independently produced Jim Jarmusch's *The Limits of Control* in Spain for Focus Features and she produced *American Swing* for Magnolia Pictures. She line produced the Oscar nominated *Dancemaker*, *Buffalo '66*, *Two Girls and a Guy*, *American Psycho* and *Heavy*. While head of production with Mark Cuban's HDNet Films, Open City Films and Blow Up Pictures, Gretchen supervised over 25 features including *Redacted*, *Enron*, *Broken English*, *Bubble*, *Lovely and Amazing* and *Coffee and Cigarettes*.

Zenaida Mendez has been awarded the 2022 prestigious Jewell Ryan White Award for Cultural Diversity from the Alliance of Community Media. This annual award is given to persons who show an outstanding contribution to a process that encourages, facilitates, or creates culturally diverse and/or non-mainstream community involvement in the field of community media. Mendez holds the esteemed position of Director of Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN) El Barrio Firehouse Community Media Center. Mendez has an intensive career in public service, community activism, television production, and filmmaking. As a social justice activist, she is an avid voice for tolerance and has many years of experience working as an advocate for women's and LGBTQI+ rights, as well as economic, racial and environmental justice. She also develops dynamic event-based programming initiatives, including developing partnerships with local nonprofits and community groups. She is currently Executive Producer of the monthly facilitated MNN Productions: *Both Sides of the Bars*, *Radical Imagination*, *Critica, NY*, *Punto de Vista*, *Makilala TV* the only National Filipino-American TV Program, *Femenismo Global* with former NYC Councilwoman Margarita Lopez, *Health Action TV* with Former Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, Forward

Together: Bishop William J. Barber II and the Poor People's Campaign. As a filmmaker, Mendez collaborated on the film *Coffee and a Donut* the 2019 Best Short film by Independence Latino Film Festival NYC, Int'l Indie works (Audience Choice Award); SAG-AFTRA Foundation, Short film Showcase, and Dominican film Festival showcase. She is Co-Producer *Clandestiny*, the Artemis Award-winner Women in Action Film.

Emelyn Stuart embodies all things are possible when you marry purpose, passion, serious work ethic and commitment. Producing wasn't an obvious path for this businesswoman who doesn't deem herself an innate "creative" but it has proven to be a great fit for an extraordinary woman that has allowed making a difference propel her to uncharted territory. With a degree in business and less than a decade in the industry, Stuart has exemplified leadership and provided inspiration to filmmakers globally. A vast range of projects that includes a successful off-Broadway play makes Stuart different from her collaborators, but also garners her recognition internationally. Her wildly successful web series, *12 Steps to Recovery*, earned Emelyn the Best Producer award at the 2011 LAWebfest. Stuart is partly responsible for multiple award-winning feature films including *The Turnaround* and *Title VII*. Her feature film *Life Is Too Short* premiered to sold out audiences in New York during its debut screening and in 2017 it was awarded Best Feature Film domestically and internationally at various film festivals. In 2018, Stuart opened an independent movie theater in New York called Stuart Cinema & Cafe. It will offer distribution deals to independent filmmakers and be a resource hub for artists. Now in 2022, she is building a multiplex movie theater in NY. This will make her the first Afro Latina to own a multiplex in NY.

[LINK TO DOWNLOAD IMAGES](#)

Press Inquiries:

Katie Chambers
Senior Director of Community and Public Relations
New York Women in Film & Television
kchambers@nywift.org
(212) 679 - 0870