

NYWIFT || New York Women in Film & Television

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NEW YORK WOMEN IN FILM & TELEVISION PRESENTS 10 SCHOLARSHIPS AND 14 FESTIVAL AWARDS THROUGHOUT 2022

Cash awards and association memberships will nurture emerging and established voices in film and television

NEW YORK, NY – November 22, 2022 – New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) is pleased to announce the presentation of 10 scholarships to film and television production students and 14 festival awards to filmmakers at seven New York area festivals in 2022 as part of the organization’s ongoing commitment to nurturing the next generation of women in media.

NYWIFT presented festival awards for Excellence in Directing across various categories to: **Ellie Foubi** (*Our Father the Devil*) and **Laura Checkoway** (*The Cave of Adullam*) at the Hamptons International Film Festival; **Ju Martins** (*Nā Kama Kai - Children of The Ocean*) and **Cassie Hay & Amy Winston** (*Queens of Pain*) at Montauk Film Festival; **Karina Dandashi** (*Dress Up*), **Silvina Schnicer & Ulises Porra** (*Carajita*), and **Laura Angel Rengifo & Noah David DeBonis** (*Strangers to Peace*) at New York Latino Film Festival; **Marchelle Thurman** (*Black White & The Greys*), **Paula Cajiao** (*Shell Shocked*), and **Edna Luise Biesold** (*Sunscreen*) at SOHO International Film Festival; **Jasmin Mara López** (*Silent Beauty*) and **Kayla Sun** (*The Code of Family*) at UrbanWorld Film Festival; and **Holly Morris** (*Exposure*) and **Signe Baumann** (*My Love Affair with Marriage*) at Woodstock Film Festival.

“NYWIFT is proud to expand our festival partnerships to recognize top-tier talent, emerging voices, and the women content creators making waves in narrative and documentary filmmaking,” said NYWIFT CEO Cynthia Lopez. “It is so impressive that these recipients not only completed their films during the pandemic – they excelled in reinventing how films are made during this time.”

The festival award-winners each received a cash prize in addition to a one-year Industry Membership with New York Women in Film & Television. Most were presented in-person by a member of the NYWIFT leadership team at each festival’s awards ceremony or screening.

Among the students, nine scholarships were presented to women studying at Brooklyn College, City College, Columbia University, Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema, Hunter College, New York University, and Stony Brook University, and one student received the NYWIFT Sabrina Wright-Gilliar Award at the Academy for Careers in Television & Film (TvF).

Awards were presented to Brooklyn College Film Production undergraduate students **Nevada Caldwell** and **Aurora McCrory**; City College MFA candidate in Film Production **Julie Neira Campoverde**; Columbia University MFA candidate in Screenwriting and Directing **Nana Duffuor**; Feirstein Graduate

School of Cinema MFA Cinematography student **Luisa Madrid**; Hunter College MFA candidates in Integrated Media Arts **Melissa Montero** and **Jacqueline Wade**; New York University MFA candidate in Film **Bethiael Alemayoh**; and Stony Brook University MFA candidate in Directing **Micah Demby**.

This year's NYWIFT **Sabrina Wright-Gilliar Award**, Academy for Careers in Television & Film (TvF) was presented to aspiring Assistant Director **Jasmine Gonzalez**. The scholarship honors the memory of the legendary prop master Wright-Gilliar (*The Good Wife*) and supports a high school senior committed to a career in production.

“It is vital to support and nurture women creatives as they leave academia to begin the next phase of their professional journeys,” said NYWIFT CEO **Cynthia Lopez**. “We are thrilled to welcome them to the NYWIFT community and are excited to see what each of these wildly talented students will accomplish.”

In addition to receiving cash scholarships, all were also welcomed into the organization's Next Wave membership program for emerging professionals.

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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 Festival Award Winners:

Hamptons International Film Festival:

1. **Ellie Foubi, *OUR FATHER, THE DEVIL*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Directing a Narrative Film
 - a. An African refugee's quiet existence in a sleepy mountain town in the south of France is upended by the arrival of a charismatic Catholic priest whom she recognizes as the warlord who slaughtered her family.
2. **Laura Checkoway, *THE CAVE OF ADULLAM*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Directing a Documentary Film
 - a. It tells the story of martial arts sensei Jason Wilson. He tenderly guides his often-troubled young Detroit students with a beautifully effective blend of compassion and tough love.

Montauk Film Festival:

1. **Ju Martins, *Nā Kama Kai - Children of The Ocean*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Directing (\$1,000)
 - a. Short film about *Na Kama Kai (Children of the Sea)*, a non-profit that cultivates stewardship and love for nature in youth by connecting them to the land and the sea. They hold an ocean clinic in Brazil and through interaction with locals, they quickly realize the many ways the ocean connects us rather than divides us.
2. **Cassie Hay & Amy Winston, *Queens of Pain*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Directing (\$1,000)
 - a. *Queens of Pain* follows three women — Suzy Hotrod, Evilicious, and Captain Smack Sparrow — as they fight to balance life in New York City with the work needed to keep their spots on the world's best roller derby team.

NewFest Film Festival:

1. **Karina Dandashi, *Dress Up*** - awarded NYWIFT Emerging Filmmaker Award Grant (\$1,000)
 - a. On the eve of her sister's wedding, Karina brings her "best friend" home to meet the family. In the face of familial expectations her anxieties begin to unravel.

New York Latino Film Festival:

1. **Silvina Schnicer & Ulises Porra, *CARAJITA*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Narrative Directing (\$1,000)
2. **Laura Angel Rengifo & Noah David DeBonis, *STRANGERS TO PEACE*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Documentary Directing (\$1,000)

SOHO International Film Festival:

1. **MARCHELLE THURMAN, *Black White & The Greys*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Narrative Directing (\$1,000)
 - a. Jordie and Caleb Grey have a seemingly perfect life. That all changes when a nationwide pandemic hits, and the couple are forced to quarantine together. As various events of 2020 unfold, the couple gradually discovers that their beliefs simply don't align on many important issues. *BLACK WHITE AND THE GREYS* is an unflinching look at marriage, race, and many other tough topics of 2020. Timely, relevant, romantic, funny, and at times... heartbreaking. It's a powerful, original story that needs to be told.

2. **PAULA CAJIAO, *Shell Shocked*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Directing Short (\$500)
 - a. After 2 years of unsuccessful treatment a combat veteran suffering from Battle induced stuttering discovers a controversial drug banned since WW2 that has the possibility to cure him
3. **EDNA LUISE BIESOLD, *Sunscreen*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Directing Short (\$500)
 - a. When Shelby and Mason get to the beach they realize that neither of them brought sunscreen. Who's to blame? - This film observes how accountability is handled in a crumbling relationship.

UrbanWorld:

1. **Jasmin Mara López, *SILENT BEAUTY*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Documentary Directing (\$1,000)
 - a. A lyrical and sensitive autobiographical exploration of the filmmaker's family history with child sexual abuse and a culture of silence.
2. **Kayla Sun, *THE CODE OF FAMILY*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Short Narrative Directing (\$500)
 - a. After the death of her husband, an Asian grandma decides to learn computer science to fulfill his last wish.

Woodstock Film Festival:

1. **HOLLY MORRIS, *EXPOSURE*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Documentary Directing (\$1,000)
 - a. As the Arctic polar ice cap melts, reaching the North Pole has become increasingly dangerous. Yet an expedition of ordinary women from the Arab World and the West strap on skis and haul heaving sledges toward true North, against all odds and polar advice. Award-winning filmmaker Holly Morris (*The Babushkas of Chernobyl*) captures it all, from frostbite and polar bear threats, to sexism and self-doubt in this intimate story of resilience, survival and global citizenry - on what may be the last-ever expedition to the top of the world.
2. **SIGNE BAUMANE, *MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH MARRIAGE*** - awarded NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Narrative Directing (\$1,000)
 - a. A young spirited woman, Zelma, is determined to conform to the pressures of singing Mythology Sirens in order to be loved, but the more she conforms, the more her body resists. A story of inner female rebellion.

Scholarship Recipient Bios:

Bethiael Alemayoh (New York University) is a filmmaker and producer based in New York and Texas. After interning for Richard Linklater, she created and directed the short film series *We Are*, which was distributed by Issa Rae Productions. Her short film, *Yirga*, had its world premiere at SXSW and went on to screen at Blackstar Film Festival, Palm Springs International Film Festival, and more. She has

produced short films, music videos and social media campaigns. Currently, she is studying in NYU's Tisch School of the Arts graduate film program.

Nevada Caldwell (Brooklyn College) returned to school in 2019 after a career as a comedic actor and teaching artist. She has performed at American Stage Theater, Upright Citizen's Brigade, and the People's Improv Theater, among others. Her most recent film appearance was opposite Carrie Coon in *Great Choice*, an official selection at Sundance Film Festival 2017 and an audience choice winner at Toronto Film Festival. Through the gracious and excellent tutelage of her professors at Queensborough Community College and Brooklyn College, Nevada has found her voice as a screenwriter and narrative filmmaker. Her award-winning short film, *Feline Noir*, toured the country in 2021 as a selection of the NY Cat Film Festival, which benefits animal welfare organizations in the United States. Her films use comedy to address existential crises, illuminate the human (and sometimes feline) experience, and affect social change.

Julie Neira Campoverde (City College) is an Ecuadorian award-winning filmmaker based in Brooklyn, New York. She won the BAFTA NY 2021 DLT Entertainment Scholarship with her short horror script for *El Chuzalongo* as well as an honorable mention for the Nyman Family Project Award in her 2nd MFA year at City College. *El Chuzalongo*, her Ecuadorian debut, won Best Editing at the CityVisions film festival. Julie uses the horror genre as a platform to create awareness of worldwide issues like the obsession with social media (*The Crossroads*), dating apps (*Saturday Night*) and toxic masculinity rooted in Latinx and Hispanic culture (*El Chuzalongo*).

Micah Demby (Stony Brook University) is a young filmmaker from Cedar Hill, TX and the founder of justMADproductions. She is currently pursuing an MFA in Film with a concentration in Directing at Stony Brook University under a Turner Fellowship. In May 2019, she completed her BFA in Digital Filmmaking at Loyola University New Orleans. During her time at Loyola, she created several short - films and documentaries, including *It Be Like That* (2019), *kaia + the boys* (2018), and *KAN* (2018). Micah's work centers around how relationships develop—both romantic and platonic—as well as feelings of fear, anxiety, and loneliness, and/or social issues. Micah has loved writing from a young age and aims to script and produce her own films. She is in post-production with three short films, *He Came from Venus*, *Silhouette*, and *Forward*.

Nana Duffuor (Columbia University) is a multidisciplinary storyteller and filmmaker of Ghanaian descent based in New York City. She is currently pursuing an MFA in Screenwriting/Directing at Columbia University. In 2018, two of her short films, *Resilience* and *Speak*, were official selections of the 2018 International Queer Women of Color Film Festival. Her most recent short film, *Casual Encounter*, was an official selection of the 2022 People's Film Festival in Harlem and received the award for Best Actress in a Short Film at the 2022 Newark International Film Festival. She wrote and directed the short film *Confirmation* in Ghana in June 2022 and it is currently in post-production. Nana is passionate about collaborating with fellow dreamers and disruptors to tell unforgettable stories that offer nuanced portrayals of the human condition.

Jasmine Gonzalez (Sabrina Wright-Gilliar Award, Academy for Careers in Television & Film (TvF)) was raised in Queens by Mexican parents and attended Queens public schools her entire life. She discovered her passion for filmmaking as a student attending the Academy for Careers in Television and Film (TvF).

Throughout her time there she dabbled in screenwriting and directing, but an opportunity that led her to acting as Assistant Director (AD) during senior year solidified where she belonged on set. Working alongside a director to help bring their ideas to fruition helped Jasmine to realize she loved the balance of both logistical and creative responsibilities that came with being an AD. As a first-generation college student Jasmine will be moving onto New York University in the Fall of 2022, where she plans to double major in Film Production and Business.

Luisa Madrid (Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema), an MFA cinematography student, believes in the power of narrative storytelling. With a background in social work and documentary photography, she has developed an eye attuned for detecting emotional intimacy, helping her to ground the surreal with a humanistic approach. Luisa is a fine technician, a strong collaborator, and an intuitive artist with a unique antenna for human fragility and resilience. In her spare time, she enjoys taking photos, visiting family in Miami, going on road trips, and reading cinematography books.

Aurora McCrory (Brooklyn College) is originally from Michigan, and moved to New York City in 2016 to pursue a career in the entertainment industry. She is a 2019 graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and decided to return to her studies, now working on completing her Bachelor's Degree in screenwriting. Aurora is appreciative to have been a scholarship recipient and would like to thank the Brooklyn College Film Department faculty.

Melissa Montero (Hunter College) is an activist and filmmaker of Puerto Rican and Ecuadorian heritage from Queens, New York. She has a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Television Production and a minor in Dance from Hofstra University. She is a recent graduate of Hunter College's MFA - Integrated Media Arts Program. Her thesis film *Memorias de Mi Familia*, inspired by the family photo album, is a personal documentary where she, Melissa, explores the meaning of "home", through her family's story of multiple migrations between Puerto Rico and the United States, is currently looking to enter the film festival circuit this season. Melissa hopes to continue making films about her heritage, and cultural experience.

Jacqueline Wade (Hunter College) is a graduate of Temple University Theater Department and Circle in the Square Two-Year Certificate Actor's Training Program in New York City. She holds a graduate MFA Degree from the City College of New York in Film from the Film Department. She has worked as an adjunct professor at Hunter City University of New York in the Media and Film Department. She finished up her second MFA at Hunter City University of New York in the Integrated Media Arts Program in 2022. She is a member of AEA and SAG-AFTRA. She is the founder of Women of Color Productions, Inc. Jacqueline's goal is to create works of art as an activist artist that deal with the human condition, race, and social justice issues. She combines theater with documentary/ narrative filmmaking, animation along with interactive media and puppetry. As an actress, Jacqueline Wade has performed at various regional theaters throughout the country, including Wilma Theater, LaMaMa E.T.C., and Classical Theater of Harlem. She has also written over 20 plays. In 2021, Jacqueline designed, sculpted, and lead builder for the 18ft giant Mumia puppet. The puppet was used in Philadelphia and New York for rallies and was on display in the International Puppet Fringe Festival NYC 2021. She recently created, designed, and was lead builder for a 20ft Mother Earth Puppet that was used in Veterans for Peace event in New York City. Her puppet film *Osage* was shown as part of the film festival DOC NYC in 2021.

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