

NALIP, NFMLA and Starz Partner for 3rd Year on #TakeTheLead Writers' Intensive | Exclusive

The program provides tools, resources and mentors to aspiring TV writers from underrepresented backgrounds



Art for STARZ's #TakeTheLead Writers' Intensive (Photo Credit: STARZ)

Kayla Cobb September 4, 2024 @ 12:00 PM



The National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP) and the NewFilmmakers Los Angeles (NFMLA) are partnering with [Starz](#) for the third year in a row on the #TakeTheLead Writers' Intensive. The program is dedicated to providing tools and resources to aspiring TV writers from underrepresented backgrounds.

The program encourages those selected to hone their craft and perfect their spec scripts as it offers a network of mentors, industry executives and established writers.

“Accurate representation on screen starts in the writers’ room, and the Starz #TakeTheLead Writers’ Intensive serves as a pathway for those diverse voices to further their careers,” Kathryn Busby, president of original programming at Starz, said in a statement to press. “I’m so pleased Starz is collaborating with NALIP and NFMLA for the third consecutive year on this program that underscores our company’s commitment to providing opportunities for women and underrepresented societal groups. We’ve seen exceptionally talented writers participate in the intensive in previous years, and I am confident our next cohort will continue that tradition.”

This year, #TakeTheLead will start with 10 writers. Guided and encouraged by their mentors, the writers will be encouraged to develop an episode treatment and pitch. After phase one comes to an end, a jury will then rigorously evaluate submissions, selecting four standout writers to advance to the program’s second phase. This narrowing will give the fellows a more hands-on experience and ensure the program has a greater impact on each fellow. Starz original programming executives Sebastian Arboleda and Tara Roy will serve as mentors.

Call for entries will open Thursday, Sept. 5, at 11 a.m. PT and will close on Sept. 25 at 3:59 p.m. PT. Participants will be announced on Oct. 9.

“Professional pipeline programs designed for emerging writers, particularly those from underrepresented communities, are essential. They provide crucial resources, access, and financial support to nurture the next generation of filmmakers,” NALIP executive director Diana Luna and NFMLA executive director Larry Laboe said in a statement. “This collaboration empowers talented writers to craft the compelling stories and characters we are privileged to enjoy on screen.”

“Wizards Beyond Waverly Place” writer and first year participant Jorge Thompson noted that he felt “set up for success” going into his Disney Channel job thanks to the Intensive. As for second year participant and writer Ora Yashar, she said she was “impressed by the caliber of industry leaders” of the program as well as “the candid nature of the conversations we had.”

“Their generous and indispensable advice provided me with the tools I needed in order to successfully transition from showrunner’s assistant to staff writer,” Yashar said.

In addition to the #TakeTheLead Writers’ Intensive, Starz will continue its support of the ongoing writing development of alumni through an internal grant opportunity. The premium cable network will award a \$5,000 grant to three alumni fellows to develop a concept that aligns with the network’s commitment to inclusive, provocative storytelling for mature audiences and fits the overall Starz theme of “We’re All Adults Here.”

Starz’s commitment to #TakeTheLead comes at a time when more networks are pulling back from their previous commitments to diversity and inclusion. Earlier this year, [a report from Samba TV](#) found that non-white leads in top TV shows dropped by 7% this year compared to 2023. Many have voiced [their fears](#) that the overall contraction in the industry will led to networks taking fewer chances on shows from marginalized communities.

Kayla Cobb

Kayla has covered the TV industry for more than seven years. Before joining TheWrap in April of 2023, she was the Senior TV Reporter at Decider, the New York Post’s entertainment vertical that focuses on the streaming industry. She was instrumental to the site’s growth, helping transform a fledgling site to a respected name in...