

CBS ANNOUNCES WRITERS FOR ITS “2019-2020 WRITERS MENTORING PROGRAM” INITIATIVE



(L-R): Minoti Vaishnav, Mike Diaz, Chandra Thomas, Lydia Teffera, Gia Gordon, Gabriel Ho

LOS ANGELES – Oct. 23, 2019 – CBS today announced the six writers selected to participate in the 2019-2020 Writers Mentoring Program. Since its inception in 2004, the program has served to provide mentorships, access and opportunity for writers.

The eight-month mentoring program pairs writers with a CBS executive mentor who helps them develop a new piece of material. Following the mentorship period, the writers participate in a 16-week workshop designed to teach them everything about the television business, as well as provide them access to agents, managers, executives, showrunners and producers.

“Our initiative focuses on professional growth that we believe lay the foundation for sustainable success in a very competitive marketplace,” said Tiffany Smith-Anoa’i, Executive Vice President, Entertainment Diversity, Inclusion and Communications, CBS Entertainment. “All of the participants from last year are now staffed on shows, including HAWAII FIVE-0, NCIS: NEW ORLEANS, SEAL TEAM, NANCY DREW and BROKE all at the Network or Studio. Now in its 17th year, the exposure, access and opportunity this program gives our writers is key in creating game-changers in our industry. Many of our alumni have gone on to become executive producers on various television shows.”

This year’s participants listed below were selected from a pool of over 1,500 applicants. Click [HERE](#) to download their photos.



Mike Diaz, Drama Writer:

Mike Diaz was raised in Melbourne, Fla. and earned a B.A. in history and an M.F.A in film from the University of Central Florida. He has written, directed, and produced narrative features, documentaries, short films and digital series. His work has brought him to six continents – from Iceland and Australia to Nigeria and the Galapagos, and many places in between. He lived for several years in New York City, producing and teaching for National Geographic before relocating to Los Angeles to focus on writing scripted television.



Gia Gordon, Drama Writer:

Southern California native Gia Gordon spent half of her childhood in Inglewood and the other half in Orange County. After graduating with a B.A. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Gordon lived in Prague as a democracy fellow with the Open Society Institute. Her writing has been selected for the Black List Feature Screenwriters Lab and a Hedgebrook Screenwriting Residency. Since 2015, she has been hired to write for producers and companies in Beijing, London, Atlanta and Los Angeles.



Gabriel Ho, Drama Writer:

Gabriel Ho grew up in Irvine, Calif., where his father was a pastor. He earned a B.A. from Columbia University and worked for the Department of Defense before he decided he wanted to be a writer. He started in the mailroom at WME, and later worked as a writers' assistant on shows including TNT's "Animal Kingdom" and Amazon's "The Dark Tower." Most recently, Ho was a 2018 CAPE New Writers Fellow, Final Draft Big Break Finalist and Humanitas New Voices Semifinalist.



Lydia Teffera, Drama Writer:

Lydia Teffera is a drama writer from Washington, D.C. She was raised by a vibrant family of Ethiopian immigrants and received her master's in business at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. While at school, she wrote dating and culture articles for Elite Daily. After graduate school, she joined the Creative Tonic as a project manager. There, she completed her first feature script and discovered her true love was screenwriting. In 2016 she packed up and moved to Los Angeles, where she placed as a finalist in the 2018 Warner Bros Writers' Workshop. In 2019 Lydia co-wrote her first episode of network television for GOD FRIENDED ME, on the Network.



Chandra Thomas, Comedy Writer:

Chandra Thomas works as a writer, actor and producer with a background in theater, television and film. She received her undergraduate degrees from Vanderbilt University and her MFA from Columbia University. Before moving to Los Angeles, Thomas co-founded and co-managed a nonprofit performing arts education organization dedicated to empowering teen girls. Born to West Indian immigrant parents, she calls Harlem, N.Y. home.



Minoti Vaishnav, Drama Writer:

Born in Mumbai, India, Minoti Vaishnav moved to Los Angeles on her own as a teenager to pursue her dream of becoming a popstar, and released three albums and a viral music video. After dropping her mic to focus on film and television, Vaishnav worked several production jobs while serving as president of the Alliance for Women in Media SoCal, a non-profit that works to advance the impact of women in media. Now she works as an unscripted TV producer, helping develop content for NatGeo, History Channel and Netflix among other networks. Currently, she is completing a master's degree in creative writing from the University of Oxford.

The Writers Mentoring Program has helped launch the careers of 78 writers, including Munis Rashid (S.W.A.T.), Gina Monreal (N.C.I.S.), Bo Yeon Kim & Erika Lippoldt (STAR TREK: DISCOVERY), Aaron Thomas (S.W.A.T.), Howard Jordan Jr. (THE UNICORN), Ashley Charbonnet (MAGNUM P.I.) and Lisa Bao (NANCY DREW), among numerous others.

* * *

Press Contact:

Christine Park

818-655-1597

Christine.park@cbs.com