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**PRODUCERS VIE FOR UP TO \$150,000 AT THE PITCHBLACK FORUM APRIL 7 AND 8**

**Documentary filmmaker Marco Williams to receive the Black Public Media Trailblazer Award at PitchBLACK Awards, streaming on Friday, April 9, at 7 pm**

**NEW YORK (February 25, 2021)** — Ten producing teams will vie for up to \$150,000 in project funding at the Black Public Media (BPM) PitchBLACK Forum, an interactive pitching competition to public television and commercial distributors and funders. The high-stakes event culminates the fourth edition of BPM's intensive 360 Incubator+ fellowship, a holistic professional development program designed to identify and pipeline quality Black content. The virtual PitchBLACK Forum will be held on Wednesday, April 7, and Thursday, April 8, and will be hosted by award-winning veteran producer Sandy Rattley, who serves as the creative consultant for the incubator. This year's event also includes a new BPMplus Showcase (April 9), featuring emerging tech film and art projects by Black creative technologists. Winners of the PitchBLACK Forum will be announced at the PitchBLACK Awards on Friday, April 9, at 7 p.m., a virtual ceremony where documentary filmmaker Marco Williams will receive the BPM Trailblazer Award.

Television industry executives and funders converge on PitchBLACK. Past attendees have included: American Documentary Inc. / POV, BBC, BET, Color Creative, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Ford Foundation, ITVS, MacArthur Foundation, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, PBS, POV, Sundance Institute, Surdna Foundation, Third World Newsreel, Tribeca Film Institute, WNET/Thirteen and Women Make Movies, WORLD Channel and private investors. Up to three (3) projects will be awarded a license agreement ranging from \$50K to \$150K.

Since January, the 360 Incubator+ fellows have benefited from an array of virtual workshops on pitching, grant writing, budgeting, licenses, distribution and more. Rattley helped the BPM team and each team's mentors guide the fellows in development of their project plan, sample reel and pitch. Mentors include seasoned and award-winning media makers Jaad Asante, Joe Brewster, Rachel Falcone, Sonia Gonzalez-Martinez, Chris Hastings, Byron Hurt, Sam Pollard, Michael Premo, Yoruba Richen, Sreedevi Sripathy and Christine Turner.

“The strength of BPM's 360 Incubator+ is the collaborative effort of our mentors and workshop leaders combined with the amazing talent of our fellows,” said BPM Director of Program Initiatives Denise Greene. “Even in a virtual environment, there was a strong sense of community and a shared mission to elevate Black stories.”

The 10 projects competing for a license agreement for public media distribution and funding include *Before We Wrap* by Elizabeth Charles; *Buffalo Soldiers: Fighting on Two Fronts* by Dru Holley; *Fighting*

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*for the Light* by Yeleen Cohen and Ife Olujobi; *Higher 15* by Ameha Molla and Rajal Pitroda; *Inner Wound Real* by Carrie Hawk and Chelsea Moore; *Listen to Me* by Stephanie Etienne and Kanika Harris; *Storming Caesars Palace* by Hazel Gurland-Pooler and Naz Habtezghi; *The Food Griot Chronicles* (working title) by Tonya Hopkins and Laura Colleluori; *The Ride* by Allison Shillingford and J. Lathon; and *What's in a Name?* by Malkia Lydia and Khalil Munir. Projects include broadcast programs and series as well as a digital series.

The BPM Trailblazer Award recognizes documentary filmmakers with more than two decades of experience working primarily in public media as a producer, director, writer or editor, who also have a strong track record of mentoring emerging media makers. Williams, an acclaimed writer, producer, director and film educator, is an Emmy nominee and Peabody Award winner whose films have all been nationally broadcast on cable or public television. Entertainment industry executives and funders wishing to attend the PitchBLACK Forum may request access at <https://bit.ly/3uuK10l>. Registration for the PitchBLACK Awards, which is free and open to the public, starts March 3 at [www.blackpublicmedia.org](http://www.blackpublicmedia.org).

Launched in 2014, 360 Incubator+ has helped advance the careers and projects of many dynamic Black storytellers. Past PitchBLACK winners include: *POPS* by Garland McLaurin, which premiered on ITVS's Indie Lens Storycast on YouTube; *My Africa Is* by Nosarieme Garrick, which premiered on BPM's signature public television series *AfroPoP*; *So Young, So Pretty, So White* by Chanelle Aponte Pearson and *Commuted* by Nailah Jefferson, which have received funding from ITVS; *Read Awakening* by Dominique Taylor, which premiered on PBS Digital Studio's Facebook Watch digital miniseries; and *The Hook* by Shirlette Ammons which aired nationally on Create TV.

The 360 Incubator+ and PitchBLACK are funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Netflix, PBS, the MacArthur Foundation, Acton Family Giving, the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and SHIFT.

For more information on BPM, visit the website [blackpublicmedia.org](http://blackpublicmedia.org), and follow the organization on social media at @blackpublicmedia on Instagram and Facebook and @BLKPublicMedia on Twitter.

#### **ABOUT MARCO WILLIAMS:**

**Marco Williams** is an award-winning director who has been creating films and telling impactful stories for a long time. He has been nominated three times for the Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize: Documentary.

His credits include: *Crafting an Echo*, *Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, *Lonnie Holley: The Truth of the Dirt*, *The Black Fives*, *The Undocumented*, *Inside the New Black Panthers*; *Banished*; *Freedom Summer*; *I Sit Where I Want: The Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education*; *MLK Boulevard: The Concrete Dream*; *Two Towns of Jasper*; *Making Peace: Rebuilding our Communities*; *Declarations: The Spiritual Deficit and The American Dream*; *Without a Pass*; *In Search of Our Fathers*; and *From Harlem to Harvard*.

#### **ABOUT BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA:**

**Black Public Media** (BPM) is committed to enriching our democracy by educating, enlightening, empowering and engaging the American public about the Black experience. Founded in 1979, the nonprofit pursues its mission by developing, producing and distributing innovative Black media content

through public media outlets and by investing in visionary Black content makers. For more information, visit [blackpublicmedia.org](http://blackpublicmedia.org).

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