



## **BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA TO PREMIERE THREE VACCINE EQUITY PROJECTS**

### **The BPM-commissioned short films and podcast addressing vaccine hesitancy to stream on Black Public Media's YouTube Channel**

**NEW YORK (December 18, 2023)** — As COVID-19 and seasonal flu activity is on the rise, [Black Public Media](#) (BPM) is set to release two projects it commissioned targeting vaccine hesitancy in Michigan and North Carolina. The short film *A Little Off the Top: Vaxxed Up* by William D. Caballero and the three-episode Spanish language podcast *Me Vacuno Porque... (I got vaccinated because...)* by Antonio Alanis will premiere Monday on the Black Public Media (BPM) YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/@BlackPublicMedia](http://www.youtube.com/@BlackPublicMedia). BPM media is a national media arts nonprofit dedicated to creating and producing media content about the Black experience.

The Fayetteville, North Carolina-raised Caballero, now a Los Angeles resident, created a hip hop-infused animated digital short — part narrative, part documentary — about a group of Black and Latino barbers offering words of encouragement to a vaccine-skeptical teenage client; *A Little Off the Top: Vaxxed Up* is the second webisode in a series, which is also funded by Black Public Media.

Alanis, a Mexican-American artist from Durham, North Carolina, directed a visual podcast series featuring Hispanic/Latinx community members and leaders from across the state discussing myths as well as true information about vaccines and offering solutions on how to increase vaccination rates in North Carolina's Spanish-speaking Latinx community.

The film *Well* by Michigan-based filmmakers Toni Cunningham and Eden Sadolboro of Reel Clever Films LLC premieres on the BPM YouTube channel in early 2024. The project depicts one Black family's fight to remain healthy through a half century of crises in America, including the Tuskegee experiment, Flint water crisis and COVID-19.

The creatives were awarded a total of more than \$160,000 in funding after participating in BPM's Black Media Story Summit - Michigan and North Carolina in March. BPM story summits bring together creatives, film and television industry executives, thought leaders, community stakeholders, and others to explore innovative approaches to media story development on critical issues facing Black people in America. Past summits have covered such issues as mass incarceration, environmental justice, health and immigration.

This year's summit grew out of the three-year partnership (begun in the fall of 2021) between BPM and the National Network to Innovate for COVID-19 and Adult Vaccine Equity (NNICE). NNICE, which is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as part of the National Partnering for Vaccine Equity Initiative, engaged BPM through its grantee, Michigan State University, to host virtual Black Media Story Summits on vaccine equity and to award production grants to media makers with the most compelling production proposals.

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“These artists have created some compelling and informative work for their communities that I hope will support the local community health professionals in their mission to get more Black and brown people vaccinated,” said Qiona Woffard, BPM special programs manager.

“Black Public Media is a true leader in elevating Black and Latino stories and voices that highlight systemic challenges and disparities. We are so pleased to have them as a partner in our work to improve COVID-19 vaccine equity,” said Dr. Heatherlun Uphold, assistant professor, Charles Stewart Mott Department of Public Health, Michigan State University.

For more information on Black Public Media, visit [blackpublicmedia.org](https://blackpublicmedia.org), and follow the organization on social media at @blackpublicmedia on Instagram and Facebook and @BLKPublicMedia on Twitter.

### **About the Artists:**

**Antonio Alanís** is a Mexican-American artist raised in Durham, North Carolina. His nonprofit management and teaching background enable him to use the visual arts to build bridges between diverse cultures. He uses his Mexican-American background, education formation, and passion for the visual arts to create cultural awareness about Latin American people in the South. The intersection between Latin-American art and activism motivates him to use the arts as a conduit to strengthen his Hispanic/Latinx community in North Carolina. He seeks to strengthen the connection between people of all backgrounds. Antonio uses the visual arts to explore themes such as belonging, growing up Latino, home and identity in a multicultural South. His acrylic and oil paintings portray uplifting Latinx characters that celebrate the cultural richness, beauty, and humanity of Latinx people. A visual storyteller, he enjoys using the arts to springboard conversations centered around cultural similarities rather than differences.

**William D. Caballero** is a Los Angeles-based filmmaker, writer, 2018 Guggenheim Fellow and 2021 Creative Capital Awardee. His work combines innovative animation techniques with audio from inspirational people of color, telling their stories in vivid and unique ways. His series *Gran’Pa Knows Best*, featuring 3D printed miniatures of his Puerto Rican grandfather, debuted on HBO in 2015, and his autobiographical short films *Victor and Isolina* and *Chilly and Milly*, debuted at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017 and 2022, respectively.

**Toni Cunningham** is an independent filmmaker and former Kresge Arts in Detroit fellow. She holds an M.A. from Wayne State University in media arts and studies, where she currently teaches media writing and storytelling, and screenwriting.

Cunningham works in experimental, documentary and narrative film. She is currently a Redford Center Environmental Impact Grantee for producing the feature documentary *Sacrifice Zones: The 48217*. She is also producer of the narrative film *T-Minus*, which had its world premiere at the Cleveland International Film Festival.

Her scripts have earned her a Top 10 finalist placement in The John Singleton EmbRace LA Screenwriting Competition, semi-final placements with PAGE International Screenwriting Awards, and quarter-final placements at Austin Film Festival and Atlanta Film Festival. Her short films have played at festivals such as Cinetopia’s Detroit Voices Competition, Vidlings & Tapeheads, Detroit Narrative Agency: Radical Remedies and Detroit SheTown. She is also a member of the

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#StartsWith8Hollywood mentorship program where she is working with industry mentors on polishing and shopping her pilot and two features.

**Eden Sabolboro** is an Emmy®-Award winning Filipino-American producer, director and video journalist based in Detroit. In 2015, she co-founded Reel Clever Films LLC, a video and film production company specializing in nonfiction storytelling and branded content. Sabolboro has produced and directed an immersive body of short-form documentaries, creative films and commercial campaigns, and received a Regional Emmy® for her producing and directing work on the Kresge Arts in Detroit film series, which includes 10 mini-documentaries highlighting the work and artistic practices of celebrated artists across Metro Detroit.

Sabolboro is a graduate of the New York Foundation for the Arts' Immigrant Artist Program, and was selected for Sundance Institute's Creative Producing Lab and Firelight Media's Groundwork Lab in Detroit. She served as supervising producer for Shifting Urban Narratives, a multimedia fellowship for young people in Detroit to tell their stories about change, resilience, joy, and community development. In 2022, she worked with women-led production house MAJORITY to co-direct *Year One of the Biden-Harris Administration* for the Biden-Harris Inaugural Committee.

She recently co-directed and produced the short documentary *Senghor Reid: Make Way for Tomorrow* for the second season of PBS American Masters' and Firelight Media's *In The Making* series.

#### **About Black Public Media:**

**Black Public Media (BPM)** supports the development of visionary content creators and distributes stories about the global Black experience to inspire a more equitable and inclusive future. For more than 40 years, BPM has addressed the needs of unserved and underserved audiences. BPM continues to address historical, contemporary, and systemic challenges that traditionally impede the development and distribution of Black stories. For more information, visit [blackpublicmedia.org](http://blackpublicmedia.org) and follow BPM on Instagram and Facebook and @BLKPublicMedia on Twitter.

#### **About The National Network to Innovate for COVID-19 and Adult Vaccine Equity:**

**The National Network to Innovate for COVID-19 and Adult Vaccine Equity (NNICE)** utilizes a unique model of community engagement to advance equitable approaches to adult immunizations, and to build the evidence base of interventions for adult vaccine uptake among racial and ethnic groups experiencing disparities. Specifically, the NNICE brings together researchers, content experts, and community partners to develop and implement promising practices that create vaccine confident individuals in communities of focus throughout Maryland, Michigan, and North Carolina.

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For interview and media inquiries, contact:  
Cheryl L. Duncan  
Cheryl Duncan & Company Inc.  
[cheryl@cdcprnews.com](mailto:cheryl@cdcprnews.com)