



VAFF DEI Committee Meeting

Date/Time: Tuesday, May 11, 2021, 2:00 PM ET

Minutes

- I. Welcome Jody Kielbasa
- II. Introductions
 - a. Committee Ex-officio and VAFF Advisory Board Member: Beverly Colwell Adams, PhD
 - b. Committee Members: Olivia Branch; Andrea Copeland; Daniel Fairley, II; Gary Nimax; Jung-Bum Shin
 - c. VAFF Staff: Erica Barnes, Rob Dunnenberger, Chandler Ferrebee, John Kelly, Jody Kielbasa, Jenny Mays, Lizzy Ramey
- III. Introduction of Charles Schultz' Charlie Brown Thanksgiving image Beverly Adams

Franklin is on the opposite side of the table. We are all sitting at the table, but do we all get equal seating? It is important to us that when we come to the table, everyone is welcomed and valued, and it is important that all voices are heard.
- IV. Programming Overview of 2020 Goals and Outcomes, and 2021 Goals Chandler Ferrebee

(see [DEI Committee](#) webpage overview)
- V. Community Outreach Overview Erica Barnes

In 2016, we began to look at the lack of diversity in our audiences. We invited and requested feedback from a small group of individuals, and have had different iterations of this process in the years since. Some things to come out of the feedback:

 - There is a perception of exclusivity at our events and tickets sell out quickly. At our higher demand events, we began holding tickets back and doing targeted outreach to share tickets with BIPOC individuals and organizations.
 - We should create events in the lead up to the Festival - with the leadership of Beverly, we began hosting an outreach/preview reception to welcome BIPOC individuals to the Festival where we introduced the Festival, shared exclusive ticket access, and requested feedback.
 - We should hire someone to help promote the festival to underrepresented and BIPOC communities. We created an Outreach and Promotions consultant position to help message and promote the Festival, to advise on paid media, and word-of-mouth outreach. We hire Ty Cooper of Lifeview Marketing on an annual basis to fill this role.

We continue to receive and incorporate the feedback from this process and we know we have work to do beyond what's mentioned here. See [VAFF's Inclusive Excellence Self-Study and Plan](#).

VI. Open Discussion

Committee Members

- a. What are the VAFF's current challenges and barriers to participation in Festival events and screenings by BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, differently abled individuals, etc.?

Olivia – Barriers/challenges are financial and location. The downtown mall is not convenient - specifically for seniors. Example of *Loving* - when so many of our citizens lived that era, but the film was at an hour that was not ideal and Paramount parking is not very easy. We have an opportunity to have our premiere night with a gala price AND add a wonderful Sunday afternoon showing for those that cannot come out or pay for the open night gala premiere.

Jung-Bum – Perception of exclusivity – what about increasing or having a few screenings for huge audiences at the Pavilion that help show that the Film Festival is for the community?

Jody – We are looking at events at the Pavillion. We are sometimes restrained by a film's distributor on the capacity of the screening – they're in the business of making money and that we are going to have a big audience is a hurdle.

Beverly – Events like the drive-in were fun, but had no idea how expensive that was. Let's just throw ideas out there. What is always a concern of me is that the BIPOC community doesn't know what is going on. The groups are not focusing on it. We need to get at the crux of that.

- b. Is there a perception of exclusivity in the community that we might not know about?

Olivia – when I think to mention that I met Richard Roundtree and Sidney Poitier, people are like where? They are not registering that there is something to pay attention to. I also deal with this at Lockn Music Festival. In order to overcome this perception, we need to take the Festival to where people are. How many of our churches run video announcements? – adding something like a 15 video at church announcements would go far.

Jung-Bum – figure out what the soft perception – it seems to be the affiliation with the UVA that makes it elitist. Not sure if my perception is correct, but it would be good to incorporate a little more grit into it.

Jody Kielbasa – How did that perception become grounded? Our prices are the price of a movie or less.

Jung-Bum – asked Daniel about youth's perception of the Festival

Daniel – It's something that sometimes they know about, may have heard of it, or think it's just not for them. They assume this is something for the Old Wealthy class that they would need to have a significant understanding of it being more artistic/deeper. Even though the students have had their films at the Festival, they were like "cool," but they see the Festival as more of a travelling museum, or curated experience that they think they may not understand. They also see everywhere as more crowded than usual.

Beverly – We have the assumption that people know what a Film Festival is. I really had to be educated on what a film festival is. It sounds so minor, but they don't know what it is. A Film Festival is something that is fabulous, but education about what those things are becomes important.

- c. Andrea – Who are you trying to reach? Is it wealthy, middle, lower class?

Chandler – When we poll, we hit the middle upper pretty well. It's the lower income/lower to middle income. Working class to lower class.

Gary – Family Day - that's another opportunity where we could add diversity of films

Daniel – One thing I've learned is that it is important to bring things to them. Whenever I have a program, I run it at Boys and Girls Club during times that are already established.

If you are able to – talk to area high school and middle schools and ask “can we do a screening during the Festival or speaker series when you have a half day?” Peak their interest. Who are we targeting, and why? Do we have something to offer them? Is this something that we heard that they need or is that something that came from them?

Gary – With the regular price of tickets, is going out to the movies something that more affluent people do anyway. If it's \$15, are people just streaming instead?

Beverly – With the strategy when presenting at the schools, there is an opportunity to advertise that there are more films that they might be interested in.

Olivia – We have so much opportunity to bring the Festival to the people. My background in fundraising, can you help find people to offer new events that funders can get on board with, supporting community.

Andrea – Are there opportunities throughout the year, where you could connect with lower income communities, where there's one or two films per year? Once the “who” and “where” are established, we can figure out how to make that happen.

Gary – What is UVA student involvement?

Jenny – Undergrad/grad students get free tickets through the activity fees funding Art\$ Dollars Program. We give 4,000 tickets to UVA students. There is a high no-show rate. We usually have a student intern focused on student outreach. We do a good job of reaching arts/films students, but how do we reach the rest of the student population?

Gary – There may be a perception of affluent white students attending the Festival. There are affinity groups, multicultural student center, and international students who we could reach to attend. Anything I could do to help with UVA Communities. Employee listserv

Jenny – Would love to have a one on one with you

Beverly – There is also Black Faculty

Jenny - I'll follow up with both Gary and Beverly over the summer for more outreach suggestions to the UVA student, faculty, and staff communities.

d. Programming Suggestions

Beverly – Regina King

Daniel – Is there a student track?

Jenny – We would be interested in replicating a UVA student program that gives access to HS students.

Beverly – Sports track

Jody Kielbasa – *Waves* was a very successful film with a broadly diverse audience. It's the direction of what we would like to see more often.

Olivia – Maybe there is a classic film with a retired actor – take the film to the people and we start this program annually, bi-annually, or quarterly – with conversation that's going to be able to educate the audience and looks like a classic sponsored engagement.

Gary – discussions like the one with Larry Kramer - from historical perspective, great to have been able to see him.

VII. Adjourn

Jody – We are committed to this and thank you to everyone

Next meeting will be set for late July

VIII. Follow-up suggestions from Marc Paulo Guzman

- a. Do we do a land and labor acknowledgement before each film or event/program?
- b. Would love to focus on the intersection of experiences - Afro-Latinx, Ability, Neurodiversity, Native/Queer, Fat/Size:
 - i. All Boys Arent Blue
 - ii. Well-Rounded (Canada)
 - iii. The Yellow Affair (New Zealand)
- c. AAPI focused Films:
 - i. www.slashfilm.com/pixar-sparkshorts-asian-solidarity/
 - ii. Vincent Who OR Who Killed Vincent Chin + Conversation with UVA Professor Sylvia Chong
 - iii. AAPI LGBTQ Shorts: “And we collide”, “The Rogers”, “And Then”
- d. Latinx Short Film Contest (HBO Max)
 - i. Rizo (Afro Latinx)
 - ii. Pepito (LGBTQ)
 - iii. La Serenata (LGBTQ)
- e. Partner with School Affinity Clubs with Free Tickets
 - i. UVA
 - ii. JMU
 - iii. HS/MS
- f. Partner with Local Community Groups
 - i. Computers for Kids
 - ii. Big Brothers Big Sisters
 - iii. 100 Black Men