



VAFF DEI Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 14, 2022 12:00 PM ET

ATTENDANCE

- Committee: Beverly Colwell Adams, Olivia Branch, Andrea Copeland, Daniel Fairley II*, Marc Paulo Guzman*, Gary Nimax, Jung Bum Shin
 - Staff: Jody Kielbasa, Ilya Tovbis, Jenny Mays, John Kelly, Lizzy Ramey, Ty Cooper*, Erica Barnes, Rob Dunnenberger
- *Joined remotely

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Jody

- Thank you all for joining and lending counsel/experience/committee/work
- UVA received a \$50 million dollar gift to support developing a Performing Arts Centers at Emmett/Ivy Corner which will be a major focus of mine.
- Exciting to introduce new Senior Programmer Ilya Tovbis who's extensive programming experience and expertise will be instrumental in moving the Festival forward.
- We are in a challenging climate and our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is more important than ever. Bringing in diverse stories and guests
- We feel the need to continue to program diverse stories and are looking for guidance from all of you as we revitalize the festival.

PROMPTING QUESTIONS

Beverly

- Reflective Experience for this committee meeting – thinking about what we bring from this committee and what the Festival gains from us being involved. What are we really bringing and what is the Festival gains and what do we contribute?
 - o Gary – different perspectives – help with diversity in audience and they all feed off and make sure they have good representation. Input on locations that are used.
 - o Olivia – It is about the connectivity we bring. I work in hospitality, and I am seeing a lot more minorities moving here. When I tell them about annual things, I share about the Festival.
 - o Andrea – especially being connected to the business community. We are conveners – share about the festival. Resources that I have are with business and networking.
 - o Beverly – once you know it, you see it. Making sure our friends and family know about it. There were so many films last year that I missed.
- Would the Festival survive without us?
 - o Gary – Would it survive, likely, but demographics are changing and there are younger audiences.
 - o Jung Bum – I am not sure the Festival would be okay without us. Convenience sets in and it could just fizzle out. To really implement meaningful change, the Festival needs us to help.
 - o John – would we exist/survive, likely. Our goal is to reflect the community we serve and to do that, we must continue to engage and work together.
 - o Jody – film has been a tool to engage the community, but we are not engaging all the community. How are we getting them to the Festival and being engaged? I lost sense of community from the virtual Festival.
 - o Marc Paulo – people excited to see themselves
 - o Andrea – I think you all do an excellent job with advertising.
 - o Olivia – Charlottesville changes its population 40% every X number of years, so there is always a community to reach.

- Beverly – the Outreach Reception we had been hosting for several years was starting to gel. We do not have to start from ground zero.
- Rob – we say we are the largest cultural event in the Mid–Atlantic. Cultural - what does that mean?

2021 FESTIVAL REVIEW

- Programming + Representation Erica
 - More than 51% of films presented were directed by BIPOC and women filmmakers, 31% of films were directed by women, and 32% of films were directed by BIPOC individuals
 - 56% of guests overall were women and/or BIPOC, 32% of guests were women, and 38% of guests were BIPOC
- Partnerships Ilya and Jody
 - Indigeneity in Mexico with Federico Cuatlatl – less obvious cinema, mobile/bicycle cinema
 - Samhita Sunya – Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian Films – phenomenal films we may not have been aware of
 - UVA Korea Society – South Korean films – well attended series – zenith was when we screened Parasite
 - Mexican Cinema – intersection with planned VAFF Guest Critic in resident – Carlos Aguilar well tied into artists sensibility – focusing on Mexican cinema – Guillermo del Toro, Iñárritu ... to expand their spotlight
 - Jewish and Israeli films- Palestinian Issue – specifically produced 21% segregated society
 - Black Excellence – too often as a programmer, you gravitate toward the struggle. There are also a tremendous number of positive stories that we can focus on, too.
- Audience Survey + Consultant Recommendations Erica
 - Through the CNE (Center for Nonprofit Excellence), we were connected to MaryFrances Porter from Partnership for Strategic Impact who works with area non-profits and social-services organizations. We engaged with her to improve our audience survey to better understand their perception of the Festival. Updates included what questions we asked as well as a strategy for disbursing it to our audiences. We had around 700 respondents as compared to under 300 in 200 and around 500 in 2019 when the festival was much larger.
- Marketing + Outreach Jenny
 - 101 Jamz
 - Andrea helped connect us to area businesses and groups
 - Beverly and Gary connected us to faculty, staff, and students, including helpful connections with Facilities Management and UVA Diversity Counsel
 - We offered free and discount ticket codes, but they had low redemption
- Land Acknowledgement
 - We worked with Indigenous Americans in film curator to develop language for a slide to play in pre-film scroll and contracted with a member for the Monacan Nation to invite
- Accessibility Erica
 - We added open captions and ASL (American Sign Language) interpreters to 8 films/events

2021 REVIEW FEEDBACK

DEI

Committee

- Andrea – what else did not work from the list?
 - Jenny – we made connections and started relationships. We can now reach out again to build on those relationships. We will keep trying, but marketing across the board was lower – we are not going to build back to full festival again
- Beverly – Find a better way to track results of outreach/marketing emails
- Beverly – Outreach Reception - One of the things that worked well was having tickets in hand – took some personal follow-up to make sure that people would attend and make sure they were available. Bring back comp tickets & waitlist/concierge

- Beverly liked the Drive-in and saw *French Dispatch*
- Olivia – Gala was prohibitive – loved the view and it was pretty – felt comfortable and did notice diversity there. The party was not as large as the Jefferson Theater attendances in previous years, but there was age diversity, and race diversity. I am so upset that I cannot be in two places at once.
- Gary – in 2021 – we were being selective of what we were willing to attend and went to fewer films. It was nice to see audiences wearing their masks. It was nice to see people again. I loved the energy of seeing it with other people.

2022 PROGRAMMING VISION

Ilya Tovbis

+ Jody Kielbasa

- Venues will include: The Paramount Theater, Violet Crown Charlottesville, Vinegar Hill Theater, and Culbreth Theatre at UVA. Two venues we hope to be back to in future years are Jefferson School or Newcomb Theater. We are committed to returning to those down the line.
- Make strides on what we have built already. Refining those programs again. How can we engage better?
- Ilya – 1. Bridge year – still a step further.
- Heart of the Festival – are the series which are evergreen
- Includes Guest Curated series
- adding an Environmental series
- Annually include a new focus. Mexican cinema – could be different country, year, focus
- Reflective – discover the world that is not right around you. International. Preliminary stages of tracking 1000 projects.
- Descendant – the last slave ship, frame a discussion around this that is immediately relevant to this community.
- Event screenings – might already be out/contextualization
- Ty – I saw films at Sundance – online. Check out the film *Master*. Find out if there is a screening block? Looking at Black Excellence – fungible minimum 3-4 films, up to 5-6.
- Beverly – Calling it Black Excellence is an effective way to do it, like the African American History Museum. That is not all what we want to focus on.

2022 DEI Goals & Priorities Discussion

DEI

Committee + Staff

- Ty Cooper – bring black filmmakers to town – we do not do that enough. It does not have to be big filmmakers, but should be buzzy, emerging ones
- Beverly – engage Lorenzo Dickerson
- Olivia – Is there an Anniversary Black films to consider? Shaft/Richard Roundtree – Gordon Parks collaboration with Fralin/John Mason. Archival films?
- Jody – hoping to bring Indigenous Americans Filmmakers, major Korean filmmaker, and yes to Ty's comment about Black emerging filmmakers
- Jung-Bum – how successful have we been with reaching Indigenous Americans? Indigenous community is not well represented. Have you talked to anyone about how they feel about the Land Acknowledgement? Does it come across as a token?
 - o First year of programming the series with an Indigenous curator. We intentionally tried to reach the community and started those relationships.
 - o We went through the contacts we had at the time. A lot of times, we are doing it a step removed. We need to ourselves make those connections, and ourselves for building the relationship.
 - o Beverly – one of the things that went well for Live Arts was having staff and members of the board visited the Monacan Nation compound in Amherst. You are genuinely interested in learning more about our history and community. That visit opened my eyes.
- Gary – There are new ERG (employee resource groups) at UVA that were added recently.
- Ty – one thing that our Festival does well, is we do ask the people what they want in our Festival. I have brought those suggestions back to the programming team and those have been followed up with. We can always do better. I like that we are trying to include Native Americans in this Festival.

- Daniel - are there plans to use the CODE building space?
 - o We will use it for the Panels on Saturday of the Festival. Gary Nimax – there is a new Native and Indigenous Nations Community and 2 more Employee Relations Group.
- Beverly – my experience from hearing the student interns – they are a wonderful way to connect with student populations.
- Beverly – Connect with CACVB’s Discover Black Cville.
- Andrea - Alex Urpi with Forward Adelante – now with *I love Cville* Radio/Online show – Today y Mañana with Jerry Miller. First half in English and second half in Spanish.
- Andrea – are there opportunities to co-host Black Excellence Screening? Sponsorship in Minority Business Alliance. Share amongst the Alliance. Are there ways to better promote lower-level support opportunities to more people? – businesses and individuals
 - o Lizzy – with UVA’s Inclusive Excellence we are thinking a lot more about how we are doing our business through a DEI lens. I would love to be in contact with ways to be mutually beneficial such as small business sponsorship.

2022 Fall Cultivation Event Discussion

DEI Committee + Staff

- o Three Notch’d works well, and the neighborhood is very fitting
- o Nice to hear Jody talk about different films
- o *Loving* year was best year ever
- o Nice to include a preview of what is coming up
- o Can we see the list – expanding so everyone can add to it?
- o Olivia – if more people realize how easy it is to be a contributor. \$250 for chicken or beef at a large gala function vs. \$50 annual/quarterly donation – more people realize who have an affinity for the arts. I am going to give. Needs to be brought up when we have these gatherings.

II. Review of Festival Dates and Next Steps

III. Adjourn