







# NEW PGA PRESIDENTS HIT THE GROUND

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**FOR STEPHANIE ALLAIN AND DONALD DE LINE, FOSTERING INCLUSION, SUSTAINABILITY, FAIR COMPENSATION AND PROPER DUE FOR PRODUCERS ARE JUST SOME OF THE ITEMS ON THEIR AGENDA.**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MATTHEW SMITH

Just as their predecessors, Gail Berman and Lucy Fisher, made history in 2018 as the first two women presidents of the Producers Guild of America, so too have Stephanie Allain and Donald De Line moved the needle, with Allain becoming the first woman of color to preside over the PGA as president. She and De Line share equal billing. Like Berman and Fisher, the two inhabited high-level studio exec suites before running their own production outfits.

Allain's resume includes serving as senior VP of production at Columbia Pictures, where she supervised such productions as *Boyz n the Hood*, directed by the late John Singleton. She and Singleton would later team up as

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producers of *Hustle and Flow* (2005) and *Black Snake Moan* (2006) while she ran Homegrown Pictures, the film and television production company she founded in 2003. Her other credits include the feature *Beyond the Lights* (2014) and *Dear White People*—both the 2014 movie and the Netflix series that sprang from it. She has the distinction of becoming the first Black woman to produce the Oscars, along with Lynette Howell Taylor (2020), and served as the director of the LA Film Festival from 2011–16.

De Line is currently developing projects under his De Line Pictures banner, headquartered at Warner Bros. His recent credits include Steven Spielberg’s *Ready Player One* for Warner Bros., New York Times’ Critic’s Pick *Don’t Make Me Go* for Amazon Studios, and the ongoing series *Billy the Kid* for MGM+. Prior credits include F. Gary Gray’s *The Italian Job*, Ridley Scott’s *Body of Lies*, John Hamburg’s *I Love You, Man* and M. Night Shyamalan’s first foray into television, the Fox/FX series *Wayward Pines*. De Line began his career as a studio executive with The Walt Disney Company, ultimately serving as president of Touchstone Pictures, which he followed with a tenure as vice chairman and president of Paramount Pictures. His first movie as a studio executive was *Pretty Woman*.

Allain and De Line took time to address questions from *Produced By* about their new roles and how they view the direction of the Guild going forward.

#### WHAT MAKES PRODUCING YOUR PASSION AND WHY TAKE ON THE ROLE AS PRESIDENTS OF THE PGA?

**Allain:** As a producer, I wake up every day excited to work with so many talented artists to create something meaningful and lasting. Something that entertains by being authentic and specific. It’s hard as hell because we don’t get paid for development—whether it takes a year or 10 years—and we have no guaranteed minimums, health insurance or even back-end participation. We do it because we love to tell stories.

That’s why as president of the PGA, I’m working with Donald to raise awareness about what we do, and create better opportunities for all of us. To help foster a community so a new generation of producers can make a living doing what they love. Producers are the only line item on a budget that isn’t protected, and that’s just not fair.

**De Line:** I joined the Guild at the insistence of my dear



COURTESY OF BRIAN BOWEN SMITH

Lynette Howell Taylor and  
Stephanie Allain producing the Oscars

friend Laura Ziskin shortly after transitioning from being a studio executive over 22 years ago. At a time when I was trying to establish myself as a producer, the Guild offered me support, guidance, and a sense of community. My breadth of experience within the industry made me feel now was the right time to help protect the future of our profession and help emerging producers navigate a rapidly changing landscape.

Producing is an exciting and rewarding profession, but it can be a lonely endeavor without a safety net. Producers need to have a will of iron, and we want to support them. I'm excited to work with Stephanie to try and secure health benefits for producers and help educate membership on various solutions for maintaining profit participation, among other things.

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**HOW HAVE YOUR LIVES CHANGED SINCE IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT YOU WERE SUCCEEDING GAIL BERMAN AND LUCY FISHER?**

**De Line:** I now spend a lot of time giving thought to how we can maintain the respect and standing our profession has commanded since the beginning of the motion picture and television business. The industry needs excellent producers now more than ever. It's also given me a great opportunity to reconnect with a lot of colleagues I've had the pleasure of working with over the years.

**Allain:** Like most producers, I've spent my career juggling work, personal life and public service. I serve on a few boards, have two granddaughters, three employees and a slate of projects I love. Gail and Lucy did a phenomenal job during their tenure, but Donald and I still have more work to do. It takes up a fair amount of time, more than expected, but that's what we signed up for.

**I WOULD IMAGINE THAT GUILD LEADERSHIP CAN BE ALL-CONSUMING. HOW ARE YOU JUGGLING BOTH PERSONAL PROJECTS AND YOUR NEW ROLES?**

**De Line:** If you can't juggle, you shouldn't join the circus. It's time-consuming, but so is everything worthwhile.

**Allain:** Love that!!

**WHAT AREAS DO YOU WANT TO FOCUS ON DURING YOUR TENURE?**

**Allain:** From speaking with producers, the most important issue is figuring out health care. Guild leadership over the years has been working tirelessly to find a solution for our members. We believe that health care for producers should be included in every production's budget. Every other artist on a line-item budget has health care, and producers should too. It's that simple.

**De Line:** There are a couple of pathways to achieve this, and part of the issue is educating members about current opportunities they may not be aware of, such as MPI insurance. If a member does not qualify for MPI insurance, we are looking at creating a funded account where productions can contribute to producers' health insurance. Either way, it is a top priority, and we're actively working to find the proper solution to this wide-reaching problem for producers.

Another important area is our focus on the Guild's diversity and inclusion initiative and the role it plays in advancing the producing profession. We believe it is important to continue identifying ways that the PGA's One Guild Steering Group can address the specific needs of underrepresented and underserved producers. By strategically focusing on the Guild's internal efforts and external collaborations, we can foster a diverse

## NEW MEMBERS

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### STANLEY YUNG

Stanley Yung, who is on staff as a line producer at Black Hawk Entertainment in North Hollywood, has worn a number of hats, including director (*Shadow Dancer*, *2 Bedroom 1 Bath*), producer (*The Unbidden*) and multihyphenate (the doc miniseries *Mastering the Business of Acting*). He's a producer on the upcoming supernatural horror film *Nyctophobia*.

**AT WHAT POINT IN YOUR LIFE DID YOU DISCOVER WHAT A PRODUCER BRINGS TO THE TABLE?**

While working for Roger Corman's company, I learned what it takes to get a movie made no matter the limitations.

**WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED ABOUT PRODUCING?**

"Make it fast, make it cheap, or make it good—pick two." The old adage still applies at just about every level of producing.

**WHAT'S ON YOUR PRODUCING BUCKET LIST?**

To make a miniseries about WWII's (Japanese American) 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

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### AYSIA BELL

Aysia Bell has worked as a production coordinator on such series as *Cousins for Life* and *Waffle + Mochi*, from Barack and Michelle Obama's production shingle Higher Ground. She has served as a Netflix production exec on such series as *From Scratch* and *Colin in Black & White*.

#### AT WHAT POINT IN YOUR LIFE DID YOU DISCOVER WHAT A PRODUCER BRINGS TO THE TABLE?

In college I was the senior producer for our student news live webcast. This experience allowed me to see everything behind the scenes for making TV content, from booking talent to segment producing and editing.

#### WHO OR WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GO INTO PRODUCING?

Every project I have been a part of inspires the inner producer in me. I've thought of other roles I could have in the industry, and I'm always led back to the world of production. I'm a nuts-and-bolts kind of thinker, so the physical production aspect has always been what I've gravitated toward.

#### WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED ABOUT PRODUCING?

Pay it forward! I have been lucky to work with amazing producers and crews thus far, who have taught me so much. I hope that I can share what I've learned with someone else coming up in the industry.

#### WHAT'S ON YOUR PRODUCING BUCKET LIST?

To be an Emmy-winning producer and be able to travel and produce in other regions.

membership and leadership team and encourage authentic depictions in the work producers make.

**Allain:** Another initiative we want to grow is PGA Create. Currently in its second year, it is an immersive opportunity for emerging and mid-career creative producers from underrepresented groups to learn from, and engage with, our members and leadership. PGA Create will continue in the spring when we return with the documentary cycle of fellows.

We also believe the issue of climate change is a vital topic. Donald and I are making sustainability one of the top priorities of our presidency, furthering the Guild's efforts and role as an industry leader in sustainability. Seeing the Guild bring this fight to a global scale last year at COP26 (The UN Climate Change Conference) was inspiring, and we want to do more work on that level that puts our initiatives front and center for both industry and global leaders.

**De Line:** As part of our sustainability initiatives, the Guild has already laid out the steps productions need to take to become greener. It is our job to educate our members, and the industry as a whole, on how they can further reduce carbon emissions on set. We will continue to build on the Interguild Sustainability Alliance, partnering with other unions and guilds to amplify our work in the space. To further that push, we have just hired a new head of sustainability to identify and address new areas for action.

#### THERE HAS ALSO BEEN A RECENT CONVERSATION AROUND THE TOPIC OF BACK END FOR PRODUCERS. IS THIS AN ISSUE THAT YOU WILL BE TAKING ON?

**De Line:** It is critical that producers are valued and appropriately compensated. While we aren't a union and can't negotiate salaries, the issue of profit participation is important to a large portion of our members. The erosion of back-end participation has been detrimental to producers. It has not gone unnoticed by the Guild, and we have every intention of building a strategy to both examine and confront this problem. We are currently in the process of creating a task force to address the issue.

**Allain:** Producers work for free for years developing projects without getting paid until prep starts. And then typically we get a one-time fee. Often that fee is the first line item to be cut to get a green light. There used to be development fees and back ends that guaranteed that in success, producers would enjoy participating in the financial windfall. Without it, producers are having a hard time making ends meet. It's simply not fair. So we are building a strategy to educate the industry





about the challenges we face and propose equitable solutions that value producers as an intrinsic part of the process.

**THE PANDEMIC  
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CONTINUE TO SHIFT  
DAILY. WHAT EXCITES YOU  
ABOUT THE PROFESSION  
GOING FORWARD?**

**Allain:** We know the power of representation is crucial to creating a more just world, and film and TV are the vehicle for that change. Covid may have emptied theaters for a minute but if you stay in this business long enough, you know everything moves in cycles and producers are an intrinsic part of the process. We are so badass, not even a pandemic could stop production! But it did make us all consider our reason for being. It reminded us that time is short and there's so much work to do. Thank goodness for Zoom meetings, so we don't have to spend all our time in the car!

**De Line:** It's also a time for producers to really make an impact. There is a greater desire than ever before for socially conscious and responsible storytelling in our industry, and it's a charge we should embrace and welcome as producers. We have the chance to tell stories that are inclusive on sets that are environmentally sustainable—an exciting prospect for the future of our profession and the industry as a whole. ■