



## NEWS

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### **Maori Karmael Holmes is appointed Curator-at-Large for Film at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts and Mediamaker-in-Residence at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania**

(Philadelphia – August 10, 2020) — **Maori Karmael Holmes**, Artistic Director and CEO of BlackStar Film Festival, has been appointed **Curator-at-Large for Film** at the **Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts** and **Mediamaker-in-Residence** at the **Annenberg School for Communication** at the University of Pennsylvania.

As Curator-at-Large for Film, Holmes will work with Annenberg Center Executive and Artistic Director Christopher Gruits to develop a series of films that will complement and amplify the Annenberg Center's season programming across all disciplines. She will also develop ancillary activities such as lectures and discussions, creating opportunities for students to engage with filmmakers and others working in the film industry.

As Mediamaker-in-Residence at the Annenberg School, Holmes will teach an undergraduate course and provide mentorship to doctoral and undergraduate students. She also will advise on projects including the Collective for Advancing Multimodal Research Arts (CAMRA) and CAMRA Fellows. Additionally, the Annenberg School will serve as a home for *seen: a journal of film and visual culture*, a new journal edited by Holmes, and provide additional support to the BlackStar organization.

"It's an honor to be appointed to these positions at both the Annenberg Center and School, two institutions that I deeply respect," said **Holmes**. "The capacity of film, both empathetically and intellectually, to explore personal and communal experience in a time like this is a tremendous power, and I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to teach and share with this community."

"The Annenberg Center has a long history of presenting film, starting in the 1970s, and we're excited to work with such a noted film scholar as Maori Holmes to offer our audiences a more robust film program," said **Gruits**. "Our collaboration with Maori and partnership with BlackStar Film Fest and the Annenberg School for Communication will build upon the Annenberg Center's ongoing commitment to presenting a breadth of diverse artists and perspectives for both the Penn and Philadelphia communities. We are grateful to the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Executive Vice President for their support in bringing Maori on board with the Annenberg Center."

Said **John L. Jackson, Jr.**, Walter H. Annenberg Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication and Richard Perry University Professor, "Annenberg has been a long-time sponsor of the BlackStar Film Festival, and this new arrangement further solidifies our investment in providing opportunities for students to examine film as a media industry that changes over time and impacts larger social, cultural and political issues. Having Maori Holmes in the classroom and providing support to our students serves our goal of carefully integrating theory with arts/media/technology practice in organic and meaningful ways. It also reinforces our commitment to engaging the media and arts communities across campus and beyond Penn."

### **About Maori Karmael Holmes**

Maori Karmael Holmes is a curator, filmmaker and writer. She is founder and Artistic Director/CEO of BlackStar Projects, which produces the widely acclaimed BlackStar Film Festival. A native of Los Angeles, she has organized programs in film at a myriad of organizations including Anthology Film Archives, Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia), Lightbox Film Center, Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), The Underground Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art—where she most recently organized screening programs in conjunction with the 2019 Biennial. Holmes was named one of Black Public Media's 40 Media Game Changers in 2020. As a filmmaker, her works have screened internationally including her feature documentary *Scene Not Heard: Women in Philadelphia Hip-Hop* (2006). She has also directed and produced works for Colorlines.com, Visit Philadelphia, and Grammy® Award-winning singer-songwriter India.Arie. She currently serves as Mediamaker-in-Residence at the Annenberg School for Communication and Curator-at-Large for Film at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, both at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

In 2012, she founded the BlackStar Film Festival, which focuses on independent filmmakers of color from across the globe. She was guest curator for the Flaherty New York screening series in Fall 2017 and guest programmer for Scribe Video Center in Spring 2017. Other projects include KinoWatt (2011-2012, co-curated with Sara Zia Ebrahimi) and Black Lily Film & Music Festival (2006-2010).

Holmes most recently served professionally as Executive Director of ARRAY Alliance in 2018. Prior to that position, she served as Director of Public Engagement at the Institute of Contemporary Art at University of Pennsylvania, a role she originated, creating a new department. She previously held positions at the Leeway Foundation, Painted Bride Art Center, Department of Media Studies & Production at Temple University, the Netter Center at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Independent Film & Video Association, Sony Music, and *Washington City Paper*. She has taught at Drexel University, Temple University, University of the Arts, Villanova University, Scribe Video Center, Philadelphia Community Access Media (PhillyCAM) and Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), where she is currently an adjunct lecturer.

Her writing has appeared in *Film Quarterly*, *Philadelphia City Paper*, *Philadelphia Weekly*, *Washington City Paper* and *Blu Magazine*, as well as on BlackAmericaWeb.com and Alternet.org. Holmes contributed essays to the following books: *We Inspire Me: Cultivate Your Creative Crew to Work, Play and Make*, edited by Andrea Pippins (Chronicle, 2018); *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*, edited by adrienne maree brown (AK Press, 2019); *How We Fight White Supremacy: A Field Guide to Black Resistance*, edited by Akiba Solomon and Kenrya Rankin (Nation Books, 2019); and *Fresh, Bold and So Def*, edited Martha Diaz and Felicia Pride (2012). Her interview with director Kasi Lemons appeared in the December 2019 issue of *The Believer*.

Included in *ESSENCE Magazine's* 2019 Woke 100 List (as #25), Holmes is a 2019 Soros Equality Fellow and has received awards from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the

Leeway Foundation, Independence Media, Women's Way, and Philadelphia Commission on Human Rights. She was named a Creative Ambassador by Visit Philadelphia in 2009 and was a fellow at the 2014 Flaherty Film Seminar and a 2016 Ford Foundation Rockwood JustFilms Fellow. This spring, she will be honored by the Asian Arts Initiative for her service in the Philadelphia cultural sector.

Holmes received her MFA in Film & Media Arts from Temple University and her BA in History from American University, with additional graduate-level studies in Design & Production at California Institute of the Arts. She currently serves on the board of American Documentary, the advisory boards of Vidiots, Ulises and Lightbox Film Center, and was a juror for the 2019 Full Frame Documentary Film Festival and the Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival. She began her career with internships at the National Museum of American History and Dallas Austin's Rowdy Records.

### **About BlackStar Film Festival**

The BlackStar Film Festival is an annual celebration of the visual and storytelling traditions of the African diaspora and of global communities of color, showcasing films by Black, Brown and Indigenous people from around the world. The 2020 festival, presented online due to COVID-19, takes place August 20-26, and comprises more than 80 films, including 24 world premieres and representing over 20 countries. The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is a Producing Partner and the Annenberg School for Communication is a Silver Sponsor of the 2020 BlackStar Film Festival. Visit [blackstarfest.org](http://blackstarfest.org).

### **About the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts**

The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts serves as a major cultural destination and crossroads connecting the University of Pennsylvania and the Greater Philadelphia region through innovative human expression in theatre, music, dance and film, serving an annual audience of over 80,000. The Annenberg Center also serves as a key resource for the arts at Penn, connecting master artists with Penn students in support of and as an enhancement to the arts curriculum. Student performing arts groups are also key users of the Annenberg Center's multiple performance and rehearsal spaces, while also staffing many operational roles throughout the academic year. In reflection of Penn's core values as a world-respected academic institution, the Annenberg Center emphasizes artistic and intellectual excellence, diversity and rigor in its presentations; prioritizes broad inclusiveness in the artists, audiences and groups it serves; manages outstanding performance, conference and meeting facilities; and stresses comprehensive event planning, production support and customer service. The Annenberg Center is a major provider of performing arts access for school children and actively engages a broad range of primary, secondary and post-secondary student audiences and inclusive constituencies from the campus, community and surrounding region. Visit [AnnenbergCenter.org](http://AnnenbergCenter.org).

### **About the Annenberg School for Communication**

Founded in 1959 through the generosity and vision of diplomat and philanthropist Walter Annenberg, the [Annenberg School for Communication](http://AnnenbergSchoolforCommunication.org) at the University of Pennsylvania is devoted to furthering our understanding of the role of communication in public life through research, education and service. With strengths in health communication, political communication, culture and communication, media institutions, digital media and social networks and global communication, the Annenberg School is one of the top Communication schools in the nation.

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