



# Grantee: NFMLA – NewFilmmakers Los Angeles



NFMLA Film Festival – 2/19/2022

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**NewFilmmakers Los Angeles** (NFMLA), one of the HFFA grantees, champions emerging and diverse filmmakers and storytellers from around the world and provides a forum where filmmakers can be recognized for their contributions, have open audience discussions about their work and connect with industry professionals for insight on distribution, production and representation.

We caught up with Larry Laboe, Co-Founder and Executive Director of NewFilmmakers Los Angeles, whose industry credits include producer for *Ctrl* (2009) and *Fact Checkers Unit*.

## When was the NFMLA established and what prompted the idea?

NFMLA was launched in August 2007 and has been going strong ever since. The concept of the organization was designed to support year-round programming for new voices, audiences and industry professionals who want to rally around independent cinema and storytelling. We love annual film festivals but felt that in a major entertainment hub like Los Angeles, there should be a more consistent home for showcasing content by next-gen creators.

## How many staff do you have and how many board members?

NFMLA has 4 full-time staff members, 2 part-time staff members and 8 board members.

## How has the organization evolved since you began?

In an effort to showcase, support, educate and build relationships for next-gen filmmakers, NFMLA has rapidly expanded beyond the NFMLA Monthly Film Festival to host an array of workshops, panels, competitions and networking programs, including the InFocus initiative which combats the lack of diversity in media by celebrating underrepresented voices.

## How has the HFFA helped to serve the NFMLA and how is the funding used?

The HFFA has been instrumental in NFMLA's growth. NFMLA could not be where it is today without the HFFA's generous contributions. Not only has the HFFA made it possible for the organization to hire additional staff members with the funding that it provides, but the HFFA has also been a champion of promoting NFMLA, connecting the grantee organizations of the HFFA and engaging with NFMLA through HFFA member service in the form of jury service, program moderation and more.

## How has COVID impacted the running of the company?

COVID has absolutely impacted the organization financially. It also disrupted how we present our events. From March 2020 to January 2022, we were forced to host all of our programming virtually. We finally returned to in-person festivals in February of 2022 and our filmmakers, audience, industry and staff are excited to be back to in-person events.

## Tell us about the monthly InFocus festival program.

NFMLA's InFocus diversity initiative seeks to combat the lack of diversity in the film industry by giving underrepresented groups of filmmakers (i.e., race, gender, sexual identity, region and socioeconomic background) the opportunity to showcase their work during our monthly festival. In addition to being provided with a screening at the festival, we also arrange for professional development and educational meetings with various members of the entertainment industry for our filmmakers. These include executives and creatives from companies such as Amazon Studios, CAA, NBCUniversal, NEON, Starz, Management 360, FilmNation, ICM Partners, Lionsgate, Magnolia Pictures, Paramount, Circle of Confusion, Blumhouse, Disney, MGM Studios, Endeavor, Netflix, Showtime, MACRO, HBO, Sony Pictures Entertainment, CBS, Bad Robot, Skydance, UTA, AMC Studios, AGBO, WarnerMedia and more to advance the InFocus filmmakers' craft and career. In addition to representatives from companies, we also bring in talent, including major showrunners such as Brian Yorkey (*13 Reasons Why*), Anthony Sparks (*Queen Sugar*), Leslye Headland (*Russian Doll*) and Oscar-nominated filmmakers/writers such as **Hany Abu-Assad** and Kevin Willmott. Two of our InFocus Festivals, Latinx & Hispanic Cinema and Middle Eastern, Arab & Dutch Cinema, are co-hosted by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Alumni of the InFocus initiative have gone on to develop content for or sell content to Netflix, HBO Max, Sony, and more.

## How does one contribute to this program?

There are many ways to get involved and contribute. Industry members and creatives contribute by meeting with our filmmakers and offering them advice, support and education. Companies and foundations support through sponsorship and engagement. Individuals and audience members support by attending the festival, watching the films, promoting the films by spreading the word however they can, by becoming annual members, and whenever possible, making contributions to the organization, be it volunteering their time or making financial donations. Finally, members of the press support our work by helping to publicize the independent films and filmmakers that we're working to champion. An example of that can be read [here](#) in a Variety article. It really takes a village in order to fully serve our mission.

## Can you talk about the Student Membership program?

The NFMLA Student Membership program provides high school, college and university students the opportunity to participate in all NFMLA programming for one full year for the one-time fee of \$50. This includes over 13 NFMLA festivals; 39+ individual screening programs (a minimum of 12 being InFocus curated) with Q&A sessions with the independent filmmakers whose works are being showcased; over 24 educational panels featuring entertainment industry leaders and creatives discussing various areas of creative, business and craft. Topics explored include screenwriting, writing for TV, development, production, post-production, distribution and more.

## What happens at the workshops?

Workshops help to demystify areas of the entertainment industry that can be difficult to understand or gain access to. The workshops have an educational focus while aiming to provide an insider point of view into the areas covered. The workshops consist of panels or conversations with creative and business leaders from the entertainment industry who help to educate and inform our audience and filmmakers on each topic being covered.

## How important have inclusion and diversity become in recent years?

Diversity and inclusion have always been a focus of NFMLA since the very beginning. We've always had an emphasis on making sure filmmakers from all backgrounds are represented in our programming. That includes filmmakers based on region as well as other traditional attributes such as ethnicity, sexuality, gender, etc. NFMLA wanted to create even more awareness around underrepresented groups in the entertainment industry, thus the creation of our InFocus initiative. The initiative explores diversity, equity and inclusion through programs such as Counter-Ageism, LGBTQ+ Cinema, Female Cinema, Immigrant Cinema, Asian Cinema, Differently-abled Cinema, LGBTQ+ Cinema, Canadian Cinema, International Animation, Latinx & Hispanic Cinema, Veteran Cinema, Indigenous Cinema and Middle Eastern, Arab & Dutch Cinema.

## What are the CineSessions?

It's a workforce development initiative that recruits and hosts LA-based high school students for on-set film production mentorships whereby they collaborate with the NFMLA mentor on a real, working set, capturing interviews with the filmmakers who are part of the NewFilmmakers LA Film Festival. Each student also receives their very first IMDB credit. In addition, the NFMLA holds an annual recognition ceremony for all the students at LA City Hall in partnership with the City of LA. This is to provide professional 'next steps' for the students to move forward in a career in entertainment.

## What are the goals for the future?

Our goals are to remain adaptive to the community of independent filmmakers, continue the growth of access and services we provide to emerging content creators and hopefully, in the near future, launch a NewFilmmakers Los Angeles Center where we can provide screening space, workshop space, meeting rooms, post facilities and more that can be accessed by any independent talent seeking careers in storytelling, film and/or TV. Another big emphasis would be sustainability for our organization. It is important that a solid foundation continues to be built and that our community continues to make meaningful investments toward the mission and objectives of NFMLA.

## What would you like people to know about NFMLA?

We are here year-round. That means screenings, Q&A sessions, panels, conversations, workshops and more every month. We invite you to join us. We invite you to attend. We invite you to come and discover new talent, emerging voices and the filmmakers of tomorrow. To find out more about us and upcoming Festivals, events, membership and more, we encourage you to visit [www.NFMLA.org](http://www.NFMLA.org)

## Is there anything you'd like to add?

Thank you to the HFFA for your tremendous support. It means the world to us!