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Starz #TakeTheLead Writers' Intensive Reveals 10 Cohort Finalists For 2022

By [Rosy Cordero](#)

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EXCLUSIVE: Starz's #TakeTheLead Writers' Intensive has revealed the 10 participants selected from 500 applicants for phase one kicking off on August 22nd.

The finalists are Alejandra Lopez, Corey Dashuan, Gabby Revilla Lugo, Ida Yazdi, John Lowe, Jorge Thomson, Naiyah Ambros, Nzinga Kemp, Raymond Arturo Perez, and Tennessee Martin. The cohort includes writers from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds and captures the kind of inclusivity that Starz celebrates in its programming, talent, and throughout its organization.

The program gives the finalists access to industry insiders including Starz executives [Kathryn Busby](#), Kathryn Tyus-Adair, Giovanna Desselle, Sebastian Arboleda, and Jordan Lippetz; Jairo Alvarado and Tony Gil of Redefine Entertainment; Molly Breeskin of Gina Rodriguez's *I Can and I Will Productions*; Gary Lennon, showrunner of Starz's *Power Book IV: Force*, Kelly Goode at Warner Bros. Television; Lauren Jane Holland at Creative Artists Agency; Felicia Pride, writer and producer of *Grey's Anatomy*. Serving as advisors, mentors, and/or speakers, these contributors will support the cohort in gaining a full circle understanding of the television writing ecosystem and guide them in navigating their careers as emerging TV writers.

The Writers' Intensive is a collaboration between Starz, the National Association of Latino Independent Producers, and NewFilmmakers Los Angeles.

"All of us at NALIP and NFMLA are thrilled at the breadth of talent represented by our selected writers, as well as the overwhelming response from aspiring writers during the application process" said Karla Pita Loor, chair of NALIP's Board of Directors and Larry Laboe, co-founder and executive director of NFMLA in a joint statement. "We encourage writers who were not selected to take advantage of the many programs that our organizations offer throughout the year."

Phase one of the program launches on August 22nd, 2022, and will run through September 16th, 2022. Up to four participants will be selected to move forward to phase two, during which they will develop, write, and pitch a spec episode script for a current Starz show with the support of program mentors.

Learn more about the cohorts in their own words below.

Alejandra Lopez

Lopez's short film *The Blue Cape* was acknowledged with an Honorable Mention in the category for Best Live Action at the Oscar-qualifying Cleveland International Film Festival. She has written and directed for Sony Pictures Television, W Magazine, and Marvel Entertainment. Originally from Puerto Rico, Alejandra is repped by Bellevue Productions and WME.

Corey Dashuan

Dashuan is a Los Angeles-based writer who has written on *One of Us is Lying* for Peacock. He is a 2021 Sundance Episodic labs fellow. As a 2021 Film Independent Project Involve fellow, Corey was the Sony Pictures Entertainment fellowship recipient for his short film *HARD*.

Gabby Revilla Lugo

Revilla Lugo began her career executive producing indies like *Palm Springs* eventually consulting on projects for directors like Taika Waititi. She recently sold *16 Candles* reboot to Peacock and has several projects in development with partners like 3Pas, Gina Rodriguez, MGM International, and AGC studios. She writes character driven Latine dramedies.

Ida Yazdi

Yazdi is an Iranian-American writer raised in Birmingham, Alabama. She is a former architect, having worked within architecture studios around the world before embarking on a career in television writing. She received an MFA in Screenwriting from Columbia University and is currently a Script Coordinator for HBOMax.

John Lowe

Notre Dame graduate Lowe is very loud, very gay and very Black. Not that any of those things are related. In 2022 he received his first writing credit on the Netflix series, *Virgin River*. His passion is writing emotional dark soaps that are character-based and dark comedies.

Jorge Thomson

Thomson is a comedy writer with Cuban, Puerto Rican, and New Mexican roots. Jorge was the Writers' PA on ABC's *Modern Family*, Showrunner's Assistant to Jeffrey Richman on Netflix's *Uncoupled*, and is currently the Showrunner's Assistant to Michael Jonathan Smith on Peacock's *Twisted Metal*. Jorge was a 2020 NHMC Writing Fellow and a finalist for the 2022 Disney Writing Fellowship.

Naiyah Ambros

Ambros is an AfroLatino & African-American filmmaker from New Jersey. She previously was a Scripted Development Coordinator for Vice Studios and currently attends USC's MFA program where she is a George Lucas Scholar. Most recently, her film *Agua de tu Madre* was awarded the prestigious Panavision New Filmmaker Grant.

Nzinga Kemp

Kemp is an award-winning writer, filmmaker, and interdisciplinary creative based in Los Angeles. Her work has been featured in festivals internationally including TIFF and BlackStar Film Festival, and her short, *Jamaica T. Jones*, is streaming on Streampix. Her television credits include *In the Meantime* & *The First Family*.

Raymond Arturo Perez

Perez is a gay Mexican American storyteller raised in San Antonio, Texas, and based in Los Angeles. Most recently he was a staff writer on Season 2 of Netflix's *Selena: The Series*. His original pilot *The Only Gay in Waco* was selected for the inaugural Out Loud List.

Tennessee Martin

Martin is a Southern screenwriter who worked on hit shows such as Fox/Netflix's *Lucifer*, CBS' *Training Day*, and Starz' *Family Crimes*. Tennessee's first macabre short film, *Hangry*, won Best Horror at Toronto International Women Film Festival and her pilot *Sutton Holler* ranked no. 5 on the Golden List in 2022.

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