

**LIFT ANNOUNCES THE START OF OUR
FILMMENTOR PROGRAM MENTORING EIGHT EMERGING FEMALE FILMMAKERS
OVER THE NEXT FIVE MONTHS**

Toronto, July 8, 2014—The staff at the **Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT)** are excited to welcome eight women filmmakers to our facilities to begin **Filmmentor**, a five-month intensive film mentorship program. Selected from a pool of 75 talented applicants, the group will participate in a series of hands-on technical and creative workshops taught by female film professionals working in the field. Together they will make two short narrative film projects to be screened on January 11, 2015 at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema as part of LIFT’s annual members screening.

The Filmmentor program was funded with a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts through their Initiatives project and is LIFT’s response to the massive gender inequities in the Canadian Film Industry both behind the scene and on the big screen. Though inequity in the film industry is not a new issue, recently there has been a flurry of coverage and conversation. According to the 2012 report, Focus on Women, “of 139 films released in Canada in 2010/2011 only 21% were [by female] writers or directors.” It isn’t surprising to learn that this impacts the kinds of representations that make it on screen. Creating an accessible space where women are encouraged to express themselves and develop technical proficiency is LIFT’s way of addressing these inequities. Filmmentor is a promising avenue for LIFT to promote gender equity within the organization and in the broader Canadian film milieu.

The Filmmentor participants represent the diversity of Toronto’s filmmaking community, with technical interests and skills that range from producing and directing, to cinematography, production design, editing and sound. Mentored by professional filmmakers over five-months and using the extensive equipment and facilities at LIFT, participants will collaborate with each other to realize their visions. While many participants have creative and crew experience on at least one short film, this intensive experience will provide each participant with the access, training and resources to further their goals in the Canadian independent film industry.

The participants of LIFT’s Filmmentor program are **Jade Blair, Hedyeh Bozorgzadeh, Jaene Castrillon, Imogen Grace, Thembani Mdluli, Cheyenne Scott, Rolla Tahir,** and **Laura White** (bios below).

Confirmed mentors and instructors (to date) include **Mary Daniel, Maureen Dorey, Rebecca Gruihn, Sue Johnson, Lara Johnston, Terra Jean Long, Rany Ly, Zoe Mapp, Kelly O’Brien, Laura Perlmutter, Elinor Svoboda** and **Ingrid Veninger**.

The Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT) is Canada’s foremost artist-run production and education organization dedicated to celebrating excellence in the moving image. LIFT exists to provide support and encouragement for independent filmmakers and artists through affordable access to production, post-production and exhibition equipment; professional and creative development; workshops and courses; commissioning and exhibitions; artist-residencies; and a variety of other services. LIFT is supported by its membership, Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ontario Arts Foundation, the Government of Ontario and the Toronto Arts Council. <http://www.lift.ca>

FILMMENTOR PARTICIPANT BIOS

Jade Blair graduated from McGill University with a degree in Cultural Studies and Humanistics. Her previous work has been with documentaries and non-fiction storytelling. She also has a background in art, collage and illustration.

Hedyeh Bozorgzadeh is a writer/producer interested in stories that give voice to the margins as well as community-building initiatives. She is a graduate of the 2002 UBC Film Program and has been working in the local industry ever since. She is the recipient of the NFB and BC Film producer trainee internships and the Canada Council for the Arts Screenwriting grant, and she is thrilled to be participating in this year's LIFT Filmmmentor program.

Jaene Castrillon is a queer woman of colour living with psychiatric and physical disabilities. She is a multidisciplinary artist utilizing art and intersecting it with activism; Jaene believes in creating a proactive environment for dialogue on the ideas of wellness and illness through art. Her main disciplines are performance art, dance and filmmaking. Jaene uses her art to show the brilliance and the heartbreak of living a life less ordinary.

Imogen Grace is a filmmaker and writer inspired by the sights and stories of her home, Toronto. Her second short film, the blue comedy *#Cold*, recently premiered to much success at ReelWorld Film Festival. Imogen also works with various committees and panels to empower diversity and gender equity in film.

Them bani Mdluli is a Toronto-based, writer-director and storyteller. She is personally fascinated with the intersections between storytelling and social justice activism, and is especially interested in creating films and digital media that reflect the experiences of those who often find themselves marginalised by the mainstream canon of art, culture, and entertainment.

Cheyenne Scott is Coast Salish First Nation and an emerging multidisciplinary artist based in Toronto. Her work has been shown at the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival, Toronto Free Gallery, Wychwood Barns, Halifax Music Co-op, Aboriginal Arts and Writing, and the Amy Project.

Originally Sudanese, but born in Kuwait, **Rolla Tahir** grew up in the suburbs of Cairo before she moved to Toronto to pursue her undergrad. Ever since taking her first Film Studies class, she's become consumed by film and its power of escapism, education and representation. Primarily interested in what goes on behind the scenes, Rolla enjoys writing, editing, directing but above all cinematography.

Laura White is a writer and aspiring filmmaker. She studied English and French literature at Carleton University and traveled throughout Europe and Asia before returning to her native Toronto to continue to pursue her love of the narrative arts.