

# Fostering Media Diversity

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

the work itself and let the work speak for itself," she said.

Bell, who conceived the program, is a northeast Portland native who grew up just blocks from the former Portland Community Media building, which was re-launched as Open Signal in 2017. Having worked in public media on both coasts, as well as in the production side of major motion pictures like "The Departed" and "Mystic River," Bell was inspired to create the incubator to address the stark lack of black voices like him in film and television industries.

The program provided its six fellows with training, mentorship,

a stipend, and access to professional equipment. The filmmakers met weekly on Friday evenings to talk about their individual projects.

A talk from a lawyer about intellectual property, watching then dissecting popular films, and even travelling to Seattle and other places to work on video shoots, were some of the other experiences the fellows were able to have through the program.

In addition, the program connected the filmmakers to prominent black storytellers in the industry, such as Ime Etuk, the first assistant director of the Netflix series "Everything Sucks" and the upcoming feature film "The Water Man," directed by David Oyelowo.

Brooks expressed gratitude to have been a part of the program that Bell and Open Signal worked together on to launch.

"I feel like it's been really impactful for myself just being able to submerge myself back into film work and help other people get more invested in their own personal craft," she said.

She added that Open Signal continues to do a lot for people who might not otherwise have access to professional video equipment or training, such as offering community members free access to industry standard equipment so long as they become certified in using it through one of their low-cost classes beforehand and agree to share their work on one of Open



PHOTO BY SAM GEHRKE

Black and women filmmakers, who are sorely underrepresented nationwide in the television and movie industries, were the focus of a yearlong fellowship for filmmakers of color, called Open Signal Labs, which will premiere its first cohorts' work this Friday.

Signal's cable channels.

"It's not just starting projects and dropping them, but having the bandwidth to continue to create and bring people along that you know are not always recognized," Brooks said.

Open Signal Marketing Director Rebecca Burrell added that the black filmmaker incubator is also a notably unique endeavor.

"[A]s far as we know this the only program of its kind in our state, and potentially in the region, maybe more. It's a rare program for sure," Burrell said.

Kamal Sinclair, Senior Consultant of the Future of Culture Initiative at the Sundance Institute will give a talk at the screening to contextualize the program's importance in the larger film industry, Burrell added.

Black filmmakers made up only 5 percent of the industry's top directors in the country in the

past decade, according to a 2018 University of Southern California study, and a much smaller percentage were black women.

The screening will also feature a behind-the-scenes documentary short about program.

While the screening starts at 7pm, the doors open at 6:30pm with a pre-show DJ set from VN-PRT. The screening is at the Hollywood Theatre on Ne Sandy Blvd for \$10 general admission and \$75 VIP tickets.

An after party for \$15 general admission at Doug Fir Lounge starts at 9pm and features performances by local musicians Fountain and Brown Calculus, with DJ Kream of Oakland, California.

All proceeds for the event benefit the next black filmmaker fellowship cohort, in 2020.

More information, including online ticket purchase options, can be found at [opensignalspx.org](http://opensignalspx.org).



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