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**WORKING FILMS AND CUCALORUS WORKS-IN-PROGRESS LAB  
BEGINS ITS 14TH YEAR**

*Filmmakers from Texas, California, Wisconsin, Detroit, and New York take part in an in-person week-long residency at the Cucalorus Campus in Wilmington*

Wilmington, NC (September 26, 2022) - The Cucalorus 2022 Works-in-Progress Lab is bringing filmmakers **Suzette Burton** (Newark, NJ), **Camilo Hannibal Smith** (Houston, TX), **Siwatu-Salama Ra**, **Kimberly Mitchell** (Detroit, MI), **Beni Marquez** (Los Angeles, CA/San Agustin, Caracas), and **Marquise Mays** (Milwaukee, WI) together this week to participate in an in-person weeklong residency at the Cucalorus campus September 26th through October 1st, 2022.

For 14 years, **Working Films**, a nonprofit organization that leverages the power of documentary films to advance social justice and environmental protection, and the **Cucalorus Film Foundation** have worked together to co-design and coordinate the Works-In-Progress Lab to support the development of social justice documentaries with a focus on expanding support for Black Filmmakers.

“Each year, we get to host incredible filmmakers in Wilmington for a unique experience. The Lab creates connections between the filmmakers’ projects and local people working on the social issues depicted in the films. We bring them together in community feedback screenings that are meaningful and momentous for both,” said **Stephanie Avery Taylor**, Working Films’ Director of Finance and Organization Resilience.

The six filmmakers were chosen from dozens of submissions from across the United States. Each will receive in-depth feedback on their work-in-progress from experienced and award-winning documentary mentors, Byron Hurt (Director of *Hazing*, PBS/Independent Lens) and Natalie Bullock Brown (Award-winning and Emmy-nominated producer) and Working Films’ staff. Workshops, consultations, and community screenings provide a chance to explore audience engagement strategies by connecting filmmakers to local Wilmington community organizations.

“This year's cohort includes a diverse representation of individuals with films that aim to examine everything from hair discrimination, injustices within the prison industrial complex, Salsa and hip-hop in the Afro-Latin diaspora, and even music as a first response to violence,” added Stephanie Avery Taylor, “These filmmakers build lasting professional relationships during the residency which expand their networks and help to build the resources needed to sustain a creative career.”

**The filmmakers selected to participate in the 2022 Works-in-Progress Lab are:**

**Director: Suzette Burton** (New York City)

Film: *Tribal Strands*

Synopsis: *Tribal Strands* is a documentary film amplifying the growing movement to end hair discrimination in the United States and worldwide. It aims to normalize and illuminate the deep social power of Black hair.

**Director: Camilo Hannibal Smith** (Houston, TX)

Film: *Raza Rap Project*

Synopsis: *Raza Rap Project* explores issues of racism and placemaking through music and the creation of a brand of Houston hip-hop music that was instrumental in telling the stories of the Mexican-American and Chicano communities in the South, particularly Houston.

**Directors: Siwatu-Salama Ra and Kimberly Mitchell** (Detroit, MI)

Film: *I Believe in Our Power*

Synopsis: Detroit mother and organizer Siwatu-Salama Ra fights for freedom following an unjust conviction and shares her story as a love letter to her children.

**Director: Beni Marquez** (Los Angeles, CA/San Agustin, Caracas),

Film: *Salsa, un Tumbao' Caribeño (Salsa, A Caribbean Swing)*

Synopsis: Afro-Venezuelan director Beni Marquez explores salsa music's cultural legacy and evolution from the heart of Caribbean barrios to New York.

**Director: Marquise Mays** (Milwaukee, WI)

Film: *Black Strings*

Synopsis: An all-African American string orchestra in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, performs in the immediate aftermath of incidents of gun violence, altering the notion of “first responders.”

All community screenings are coordinated with local organizations whose members include change leaders with lived experiences that align with the film content. Filmmakers receive strategic feedback as they continue to edit and plan for how their film can make an impact once it's completed.

### **About the Cucalorus Works-in-Progress Lab:**

In its fourteenth year, the [Cucalorus](http://www.cucalorus.org) Works-in-Progress (WiP) Lab was established in 2008 to support social justice documentaries with a focus on Black filmmakers. Co-designed and coordinated by [Working Films](http://www.workingfilms.org), participating artists receive feedback on their work-in-progress and explore audience engagement strategies through workshops, consultations, and community screenings during a residency at Cucalorus' campus. For more information, please visit: [www.cucalorus.org/programs/works-in-progress-lab/](http://www.cucalorus.org/programs/works-in-progress-lab/).

### **About Working Films:**

Founded in 1999, Working Films leverages the power of documentary films to advance social justice and environmental protection. Working Films works with grassroots groups and nonprofits to enhance their programs, extend their reach, and move their missions forward. Working Films trains and consults filmmakers to strengthen their community engagement. Working Films use documentaries to reach critical audiences and move the dial toward meaningful progress on the biggest issues of our time. For more information, please visit: [www.workingfilms.org](http://www.workingfilms.org).

### **About Cucalorus Film Foundation:**

Founded in 1994, Cucalorus is a multi-disciplinary arts organization supporting emerging and innovative artists through our annual film festival, a [residency program](#), a [community cinema](#), and an extensive [community engagement program](#). More than 28 years in the making, Cucalorus has since grown into one of the most important film festivals in the South. Cucalorus education and outreach programs include Global Perspectives, Works-in-Progress Lab, Latino Lens, Media Literacy, and Racial Rewind. For more information, please visit: [www.cucalorus.org](http://www.cucalorus.org).

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