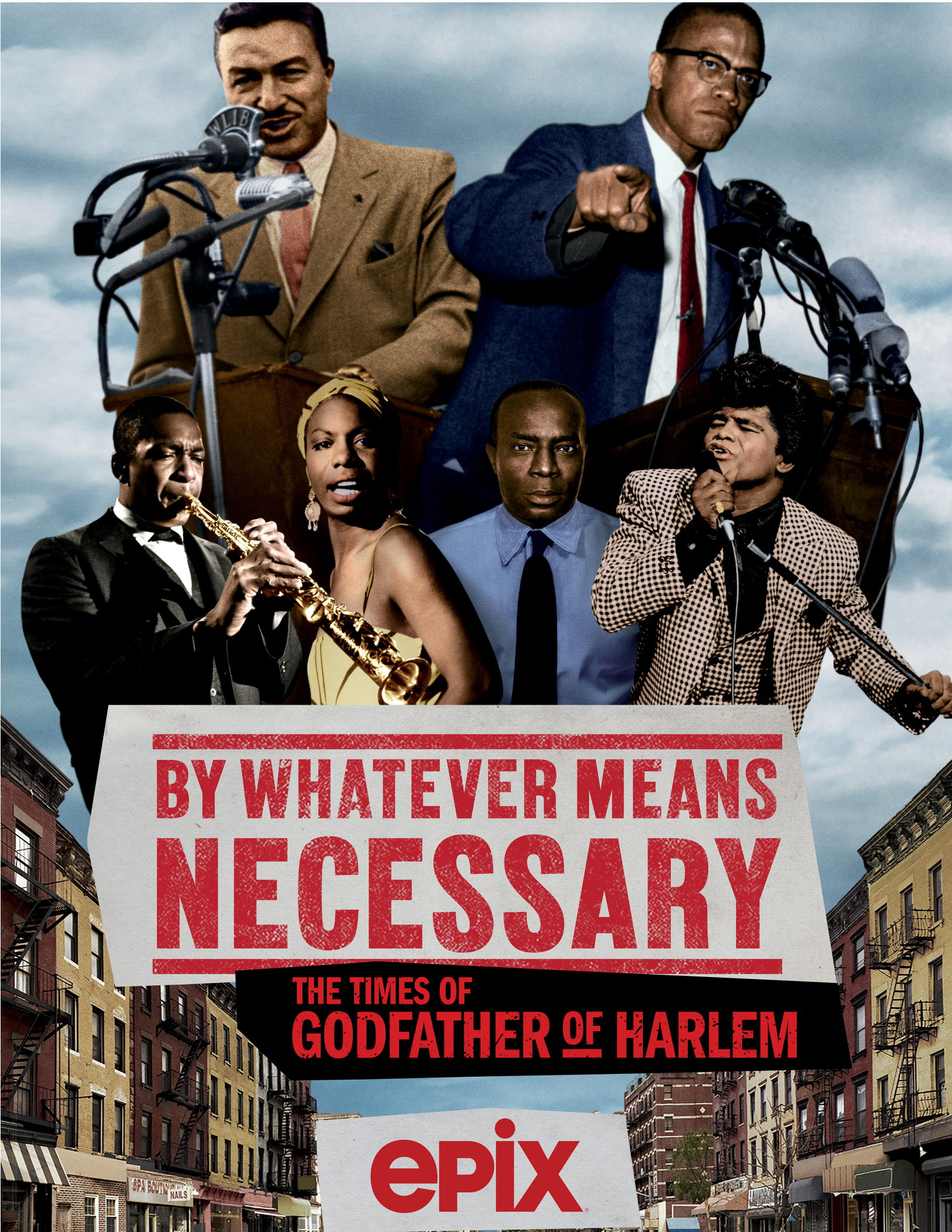

BY WHATEVER MEANS
NECESSARY
THE TIMES OF
GODFATHER OF HARLEM
epix

BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY

THE TIMES OF GODFATHER OF HARLEM

A FOUR-PART DOCUSERIES

DIRECTED BY Keith McQuirter

SERIES PRODUCER: Cyndee Readdean

SENIOR PRODUCER: Asako Gladsjo

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: Forest Whitaker, Nina Yang Bongiovi, Keith McQuirter, Swizz Beatz, Michael Wright and Jill Burkhart

Episode 1: 47:59mins | Episode 2: 50:47mins | Episode 3: 48:27mins | Episode 4: 48:40 mins

USA | 2020

MAIN CONTACTS:

DIRECTOR: Keith McQuirter, Decoder Media keith@decodermedia.com

MEDIA: Marlea Willis, marlea@mwilliscomm.com | 646.535.9056

LOGLINE

By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem, directed by Keith McQuirter, is inspired by the music and subjects featured in the EPIX original series "Godfather of Harlem". The four-part docuseries brings alive the dramatic true story of Harlem and its music during the 1960s and connects that history to our present moment.

SYNOPSIS

Inspired by the music and subjects featured in the Emmy®-winning EPIX original series "Godfather of Harlem," the four-part docuseries ***By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem***, directed by Keith McQuirter ("The Innocence Files," MILWAUKEE 53206), tells the dramatic true story of Harlem and its revolutionary music during the 1960s and connects that history to our present moment.

Featuring interviews with the stars of "Godfather of Harlem," including Academy Award®-winner ***Forest Whitaker, Giancarlo Esposito, Ilfenesh Hadera*** and ***Markuann Smith*** and musicians ***Gladys Knight, Martha Reeves, Herbie Hancock, Nile Rodgers, A$AP Ferg, CHIKA, Carlos Alomar, Robin Clark*** and ***Joe Bataan***, the series spotlights artists and activists who dared to use their voices, instruments, and lyrics to take a stand against oppression. Other notables in the series include activists ***Reverend Al Sharpton, Felipe Luciano, Denise Oliver-Velez*** and ***Miguel "Mickey" Melendez***; former U.S. Representative ***Charles Rangel***; photographer ***Adger W. Cowans*** and historical eyewitnesses ***Billy Mitchell, Courtland Cox, Jamal Joseph*** and Professor ***James Small***, among others. Combining personal stories with powerful music and rare archival footage, audiences will see beyond the black-and-white historical images into the multicolored souls of musicians unafraid to use music as a weapon for change.

By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem is directed by Keith McQuirter and executive produced by Nina Yang Bongiovi and Forest Whitaker from Significant Productions, Kasseem "Swizz Beatz" Dean, and Keith McQuirter from Decoder Media.

EPISODE DESCRIPTIONS

EPISODE ONE: MECCA
Premiere Date: Sunday, November 8, 2020 at 10 PM ET/PT

Synopsis

At the dawn of the 1960s, Harlem is the 'cultural capital of Black America,' but the community faces social problems and rising tensions. Urban blight, poverty, drugs, crime, and police harassment are making everyday life harder in the neighborhood.

But there's a new mood in the air. All over the country, civil rights protests are proliferating, expressing the frustration of African Americans with generations of segregation, disenfranchisement, and racial inequality. From the deep South to the industrial North, and from Watts to Harlem, impatience is building: It's time for change.

At the start of the decade, new music by Black artists is reaching wider (and whiter) audiences, precipitating a gradual cultural shift. While the push for civil rights is gaining in momentum, music gives voice to the yearning, struggle, rage, and joy of a community fighting for justice too long denied. Directed by Keith McQuirter. Guests: Gladys Knight, Forest Whitaker, Ilfenesh Hadera, Giancarlo Esposito, Jamal Joseph, Nile Rodgers, Joe Bataan and Reverend Al Sharpton.

GUEST INTERVIEWS

TaharQa Aleem (Musician)
Carlos Alomar (Musician)
A. Peter Bailey (Malcolm X Supporter)
Gary Bartz (Musician)
Joe Bataan (Boogaloo Musician)
Herb Boyd (Journalist & Educator)
Robin Clark (Musician)
Adger W. Cowans (Photographer)
Courtland Cox (SNCC Activist)
Giancarlo Esposito (Actor, "Godfather of Harlem")
Ilfenesh Hadera (Actor, "Godfather of Harlem")
Jamal Joseph (Civil Rights Activist, Black Panther)
Gladys Knight (Musician)
Billy Mitchell (Historian Apollo Theater)
Denise Oliver-Velez (Activist, Young Lords)
Shana L. Redmond (UCLA Professor, Musicologist)
Martha Reeves (Musician)
Nile Rodgers (Musician, Black Panther)
Reverend Al Sharpton (Founder & President, National Action Network)
Professor James Small (Pan-Africanist, Activist)
Warren Smith (Musician)

MUSIC

Come and Get these Memories, Martha and the Vandellas
Harlem Nocturne, King Curtis
The Twist, Chubby Checker
Money, (That's What I Want), Barrett Strong
It's All Right, Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions

EPISODE TWO: FREEDOM SONGS
Premiere Date: Sunday, November 15, 2020 at 10 PM ET/PT

Synopsis

The musical, political and spiritual revolution brewing across Black America is gaining momentum and volume. In Harlem's churches, mosques and community centers, voices calling for racial Justice are growing louder. By now the American civil rights movement has captured the attention of the world, but many whites continue to resist change fiercely. Jazz greats John Coltrane, Charlie Mingus and Max Roach express their activism through their instruments, while Abbey Lincoln vocalizes her pain in song.

Many in Harlem are reaching a boiling point, sick and tired of turning the other cheek to the incessant brutality against Black people and the day-to-day humiliations of continued discrimination, lack of opportunity, and institutional racism. But others are calling for patience, marching on Washington and elsewhere, buoyed by their faith – and by freedom songs that offer hope for a better tomorrow. Directed by Keith McQuirter. Guests: Giancarlo Esposito, Reverend Al Sharpton, Forest Whitaker, Martha Reeves, Gary Bartz, Nile Rodgers, Adger W. Cowans, Jamal Joseph and Billy Mitchell.

GUEST INTERVIEWS

TaharQa Aleem (Musician)
A. Peter Bailey (Malcolm X Supporter)
Gary Bartz (Musician)
Herb Boyd (Journalist & Educator)
Ramón Bryant Braxton (Gospel Choir Director)
Robin Clark (Musician)
Adger W. Cowans (Photographer)
Courtland Cox (SNCC Activist, Historian)
Giancarlo Esposito (Actor, "Godfather of Harlem")
Jamal Joseph (Civil Rights Activist, Black Panther)
Felipe Luciano (Journalist, Young Lords & Last Poets)
Billy Mitchell (Historian Apollo Theater)
Denise Oliver-Velez (Activist, Young Lords)
Martha Reeves (Musician)
Reverend Al Sharpton (Founder & President, National Action Network)
Professor James Small (Pan-Africanist, Activist)
Warren Smith (Musician)
Eunice Townsend (Grandassa Model)
Forest Whitaker (Actor "Godfather of Harlem")

MUSIC

Woke Up This Morning With My Mind Set on Freedom, SNCC Freedom Singers
Keep Your Eyes on the Prize, SNCC Freedom Singers
We Shall Overcome, Marchers on Washington 2020
Alabama, John Coltrane
Fables of Faubus, Charlie Mingus
Freedom Now Suite, Max Roach
Keep on Pushin', Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions

EPISODE THREE: CROSSROADS
Premiere Date: Sunday, November 22, 2020 at 10 PM ET/PT

Synopsis

The horrific images of "Bloody Sunday" galvanize people in Harlem, many of whom have roots and family ties in the South. Harlem has long been a crossroads for migrants, with newcomers from the Deep South and immigrants from Cuba and Puerto Rico living side by side with lifelong New Yorkers. A new, shared culture is taking shape in Harlem – especially among the young people growing up together, attending the same schools, dancing to the same songs and marching in the same demonstrations.

The rich diversity of the population shapes music as well, which is taking new forms, drawing on the different sounds and styles heard around the neighborhood...R&B, jazz, soul, mambo, blues, and a new genre called 'boogaloo' reflect the growing consciousness that all people of color share a common goal: racial justice. Music will carry this message far beyond Harlem, to the rest of the world. Directed by Keith McQuirter. Guests: Forest Whitaker, Giancarlo Esposito, Herbie Hancock, Miguel Mickey Melendez, Rep. Charles Rangel, Felipe Luciano, Joe Bataan, Nile Rodgers and Denise Oliver-Velez.

GUEST INTERVIEWS

Joe Bataan (Boogaloo Musician)
Courtland Cox (SNCC Activist, Historian)
Giancarlo Esposito (Actor, "Godfather of Harlem")
Herbie Hancock (Musician)
Jamal Joseph (Civil Rights Activist, Black Panther)
Felipe Luciano (Journalist, Young Lords & Last Poets)
Miguel "Mickey" Melendez (Activist, Young Lords)
Denise Oliver-Velez (Activist, Young Lords)
Nile Rodgers (Musician, Black Panther)
U.S. Representative Charles Rangel (Harlem, NY Politician)
Shana L. Redmond (UCLA Professor, Musicologist)
Professor James Small (Pan-Africanist, Activist)
Warren Smith (Musician)
Eunice Townsend (Grandassa Model)
Forest Whitaker (Actor "Godfather of Harlem")

MUSIC

Mississippi Goddam, Nina Simone
Watermelon Man, Herbie Hancock
Watermelon Man, Mongo Santamaria
Bang Bang, Joe Cuba Sextet
Gypsy Woman, Joe Bataan
No! No! No!, Pete Terrace
Boogaloo, Pete Terrace

EPISODE FOUR: POWER
Finale: Sunday, November 29, 2020 at 10 PM ET/PT

Synopsis

The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. sets off an explosion of rage and sorrow that transforms Black American identity and consciousness. Frustrated by the nation's slow progress toward racial equality, people harken to new voices like Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panthers who offer an uncompromising message: Reform is not enough; it's time for revolution.

The call for Black Power sparks a cultural shift in Harlem and around the world. Black music and culture, already embraced by the global counterculture, infiltrates the mainstream. But many Black artists want more than commercial success. Musicians engaged in the struggle make music that conveys the spirit and urgency of the times, and still resonates today. Directed by Keith McQuirter. Guests: Giancarlo Esposito, Ilfenesh Hadera, Markuann Smith, A$AP Ferg, CHIKA, Robin Clark, Carlos Alomar, Joe Bataan, Felipe Luciano, Nile Rodgers and Denise Oliver-Velez.

GUEST INTERVIEWS

TaharQa Aleem (Musician)
Carlos Alomar (Musician)
Joe Bataan (Boogaloo Musician)
Herb Boyd (Journalist & Educator)
CHIKA (Musician)
Robin Clark (Musician)
Courtland Cox (SNCC Activist, Historian)
Giancarlo Esposito (Actor "Godfather of Harlem")
A$AP Ferg (Musician)
Ilfenesh Hadera (Actor "Godfather of Harlem")
Jamal Joseph (Civil Rights Activist, Black Panther)
Felipe Luciano (Journalist, Young Lords & Last Poets)
Miguel "Mickey" Melendez (Activist, Young Lords)
Denise Oliver-Velez (Activist, Young Lords)
Nile Rodgers (Musician, Black Panther)
Reverend Al Sharpton (Founder & President,National Action Network)
Professor James Small (Pan-Africanist, Activist)
Markuann Smith (Actor, "Godfather of Harlem")
Eunice Townsend (Grandassa Model)
Forest Whitaker (Actor, "Godfather of Harlem")

MUSIC

Say It Loud (I'm Black and Proud), James Brown
Hey Now, The Last Poets
Jibero, My Pretty Nigger, The Last Poets
When the Revolution Comes, The Last Poets
You've Got to Learn Something, Listen My Brother, Sesame Street Cast
"T" Stands for Trouble, Marvin Gaye
To Be Young, Gifted and Black, Nina Simone
Whitey on the Moon, Gil Scott-Heron
(Don't Worry) If There's a Hell Below, We're All Going to Go, Curtis Mayfield

INSPIRED BY THE SERIES *"Godfather of Harlem"*

As the 1960s unfolded and Bumpy Johnson (Forest Whitaker, "Godfather of Harlem") battled to wrest control of Harlem from the Italian mob, the struggle for racial justice intensified across the United States. BIPOC people fought and even died demanding their civil rights in the face of fierce white opposition. But at the same time, African American and Latinx music – soul, R & B, jazz, gospel, blues, boogaloo, and salsa – was shattering racial barriers across the nation.
In Harlem, uprisings and protests challenged the forces of segregation and racism while Black leaders like Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. called for different paths to black freedom and self-determination. Amid these civil and ideological conflicts, Bumpy sought to define his role as a businessman, benefactor, and citizen in a changing world.

Exploring the history of this pivotal time and place, and the music that fueled and influenced it, ***By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem*** reveals that the struggles of the 1960s achieved great victories for African Americans against obstacles that had menaced their community for generations. And, it highlights the crucial role of artistic creativity and exchange in forging a new sense of identity, pride, and power.

Understanding the cross-currents that flowed through Harlem during the 1960s illuminates a sobering reality: the battles of the past are still being fought today. In 2020, Harlem and other communities of color still face the old threats of police brutality, economic inequality, systemic poverty, racial injustice, and ruthless real estate developers, as well as new dangers like gentrification and cultural appropriation. By uncovering the hidden history of Harlem and its music, ***By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem*** offers a startling new perspective on Black culture, politics, and community today.

APPEARING
IN THE
DOCUSERIES

TAHARQA ALEEM // MUSICIAN // EPS 1,2

TaharQa Aleem, along with his twin brother TundeRa, are best known for being American musicians, producers, authors and entrepreneurs from Harlem, NY, in addition to being close friends and musical collaborators with Jimi Hendrix. They are also noted for starting NIA Records to launch their groundbreaking club/dance hits “Hooked on Your Love” and “Release Yourself.” This same independent record label would also be pivotal in kick-starting the careers of several legendary hip-hop artists, namely Marley Marl and the Wu-Tang Clan. After the death of TundeRa in 2014, TaharQa still continues to be active in humanitarian efforts through his Hip-Hop for Humanity organization.

CARLOS ALOMAR // MUSICIAN // EPS 1,4

After 32 International gold and platinum records, Carlos Alomar's place in music history is secure. The legendary guitarist burst upon the rock scene with David Bowie in the mid-1970s, when he, Bowie, and John Lennon co-wrote the hit song "Fame." Over the course of the next 30 years, Alomar would record and tour the world as Bowie's music director. His ability to play R&B, Philly soul, hard rock and ambient music meant that he was always in demand – and able to keep up with Bowie's quicksilver changes of musical persona. He also co-wrote Mick Jagger's first solo effort, "She's The Boss," Iggy Pop's comeback hit "Sister Midnight," and played guitar for a Who's Who of pop/rock royalty – some notables: Paul McCartney, John Lennon, Simple Minds, Yoko Ono, Bruce Springsteen, Graham Parker, Mystikal and Duran Duran. Alomar is not about history; he's about the future. While remaining active on the music scene, working with contemporary artists like the Scissor Sisters and Alicia Keys as well as playing guitar on the hit song "Uptown Funk" by Mark Ronson featuring Bruno Mars, Alomar has also become a cutting-edge figure in the worlds of music education and music technology. Now, as the Distinguished Artist in Residence at Stevens Institute of Technology, Alomar is pioneering the use of digital technology as a means of giving young musicians the tools to change the way music is made....as well as finally realizing his dream of performing "Dream Generator."
Website: http://carlosalomar.com

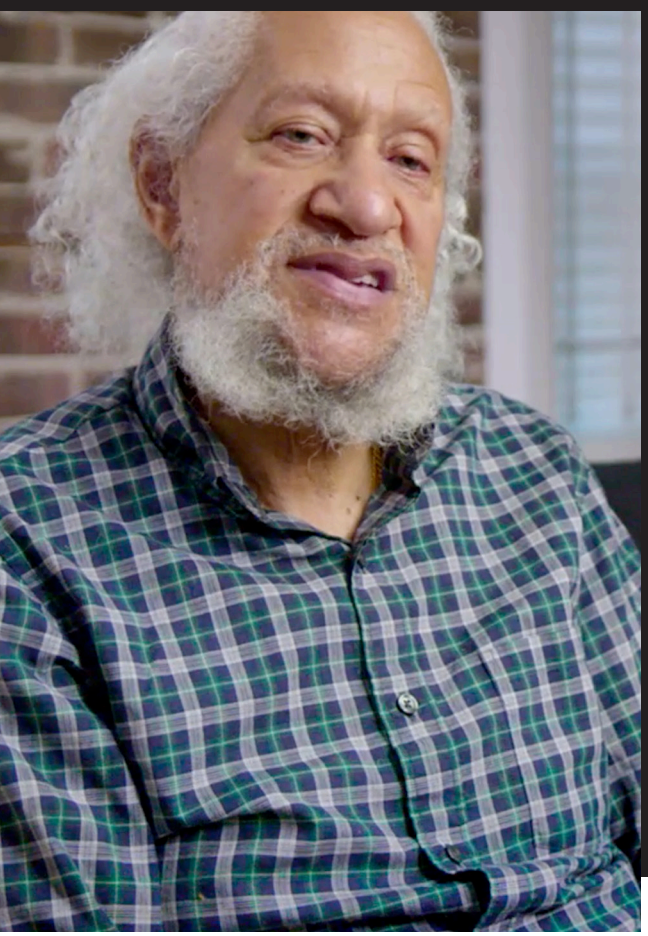
A. PETER BAILEY // ACTIVIST // EPS 1,4

A. Peter Bailey is an acclaimed journalist, author and lecturer. He was a founding member of The Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), organized in 1964 by Brother Malcolm X. Bailey was editor of the OAAU newsletter, *Blacklash*. He was one of the last few persons to speak with Brother Malcolm X on the day of his assassination (February 21, 1965) and served as one of the pallbearers at his funeral. He has contributed to numerous books, articles, and documentaries about the celebrated leader. Bailey has lectured at over thirty-five colleges and universities throughout the country on Brother Malcolm X. He has also lectured on Harlem, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Press and several other topics in which he draws from his vast reservoir of historical and cultural knowledge and uses his powerful voice to inform, educate, and inspire. Website: https://apeterbailey.webs.com/

JOE BATAAN // BOOGALOO MUSICIAN // EPS 1,3,4

Joe Bataan is the originator of the New York Latin soul style that paralleled Latin boogaloo and anticipated disco. No recording artist has more impeccable street credentials. His musical experience began with street corner doo wop in the 1950s, and came to include one of the first rap records to hit the charts, 1979's "Rap-O, Clap-O." In between these milestones, he recorded classic albums like *Saint Latin's Day Massacre*, a perennial favorite in the salsa market**,** *Salsoul*, which gave the record label its name and helped spark the national explosion of urban dance music and *Afrofilipino*, which included one of the very earliest New York disco hits, an instrumental version of Gil Scott-Heron's "The Bottle." Website: Joe Bataan

GARY BARTZ // MUSICIAN// EPS 1,2,3



Gary Bartz is a GRAMMY® Award-winning saxophonist and educator who has played with legends like Miles Davis, Charles Mingus, Max Roach, and McCoy Tyner. He has recorded more than 40 solo albums and over 200 as a guest artist. Recent albums include *Coltrane Rules: Tao of a Music Warrior, Live at the Jazz Standard Volume 1 and Volume 2*, and several others, on his own label, OYO, which is named for the Nigerian tribe and the acronym "Own Your Own." He is a Professor of Jazz Saxophone at Oberlin College. Website: https://www.oberlin.edu/gary-bartz

HERB BOYD // JOURNALIST // EPS 1,2,4

Herb Boyd is a journalist, activist, teacher and author or editor of 23 books, including *The Diary of Malcolm X*, edited with Ilyasah Al-Shabazz, Malcolm X's daughter. His articles have been published in the *Black Scholar, Final Call,* the *Amsterdam News, Cineaste, Downbeat*, the *Network Journal*, and the *Daily Beast*. A scholar for more than forty years, he teaches African American history and culture at the City College of New York in Harlem, where he lives. Website: https://www.harpercollins.com/blogs/authors/herb-boyd

RAMÓN BRAXTON BRYANT // GOSPEL MUSIC DIRECTOR & ARRANGER // HARLEM, NY // EP 2

As the Director of Music at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, Ramón Braxton Bryant continues the rich legacy and diversity of music at Abyssinian. Braxton began his work in church music as an accompanist at the age of twelve, assisting his grandparents who are all church musicians/choir directors. Since, he has worked in several prominent churches including the historic Mount Zion Baptist Church of Seattle, WA; First Shiloh Baptist Church of Buffalo, NY; Victory for the World Church, Stone Mountain, GA; Atlanta's historic Ebenezer Baptist Church; New Psalmist Baptist Church of Baltimore, MD; and the Douglas Memorial Community Church of Baltimore, MD. In May of 2018, he resigned his posts on the Vocal Music Department faculty of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts (Washington DC), and as Choral Director of the Metropolitan Baptist Church (Largo, MD) and the Capitol Hill SDA Church (Washington, DC) to assume the position as Director of Music and Fine Arts Ministries at the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, NY. Website: https://abyssinian.org/

CHIKA // HIP HOP ARTIST // EP 4

Jane "CHIKA" Oranika, is a Nigerian-American rapper, model and actress. She was featured in JoJo's song "*Sabotage*" which reached number 18 on the Billboard U.S. R&B Digital Downloads. In 2020, she was included on XXL's 2020 "*Freshman Class*." In May 2019, CHIKA was featured in a Calvin Klein #MyCalvins advertisement, and she also wrote poetry for the brand's S/S 2019 campaign. That same year, she participated in a *Business of Fashion:BoF* panel at Paris Fashion Week, made the *BoF* 500's list of people shaping the fashion industry and was on the December cover of *Teen Vogue*. Website: https://chika.lnk.to/UShould

ROBIN CLARK // MUSICIAN // EPS 1,2,4

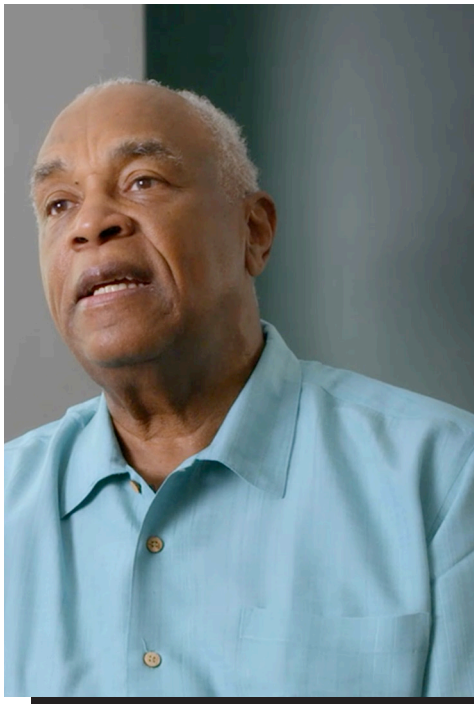
Robin Clark is an American vocalist best known for her work as a featured artist with the Scottish band Simple Minds on their multi-platinum album *Once Upon a Time*. Clark has worked with some of the most notable producers in the music business including Arif Mardin, Ahmet Ertegun, Phil Ramone, Jimmy Iovine, Tony Visconti and Alan Menken, just to name a few. She has appeared in the film *Keeping The Faith* starring Ben Stiller and Edward Norton, on the soundtracks for the Disney animated films *Tarzan* and *Hercules*, the animated Academy Award®-nominated Fox feature film *Anastasia* and Spike Lee's *Get On The Bus*. She was also featured in the BBC documentary D*avid Bowie's 5 Years* and Morgan Neville's Academy Award-winning documentary about background singers *Twenty Feet From Stardom*, along with "David Bowie Sound And Vision" on the Biography Channel. Clark is married to Carlos Alomar, legendary guitarist and David Bowie collaborator. They have a daughter Lea Lorien, who is a GRAMMY® nominated singer/songwriter and recording artist. Website: https://robinclarkmusic.com/

ADGER W. COWANS // PHOTOGRAPHER // EPS 1,2

Adger W. Cowans, a fine arts photographer and abstract expressionist painter, has experimented with a myriad of mediums over his artistic career. Renowned in the world of photography and fine art, his works have been shown by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, International Museum of Photography, Museum of Modern Art, The Studio Museum of Harlem, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Harvard Fine Art Museum, Detroit Art Institute, James E. Lewis Museum and numerous other art institutions. He was awarded the Lorenzo il Magnifico alla Carriera in recognition of a Distinguished Career at the 2001 Florence Biennale of Contemporary Art. He is the recipient of a John Hay Whitney Fellowship and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Caesar Chavez, Rosa Parks Visiting Scholars Award, Wayne State University. Website: https://www.adgercowans.com/

COURTLAND COX // SNCC ACTIVIST // EPS 1,2,3,4

While a Howard University student, Courtland Cox became a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He worked with SNCC in Mississippi and Lowndes County, Alabama, was the Program Secretary for SNCC in 1962, and was the SNCC representative to the War Crimes Tribunal organized by Bertram Russell. In 1963 he served as the SNCC representative on the Steering Committee for the March on Washington. In 1973 Mr. Cox served as the Secretary General of the Sixth Pan-African Congress and international meeting of African people in Tanzania. He co-owned and managed the Drum and Spear Bookstore, and Drum and Spear Press. Cox is presently a Consultant with the D.C. Public Schools. Cox was appointed by President Clinton to serve as the Director of the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) at the Department of Commerce, a position he held until January 20, 2001. Website: https://www.sncclegacyproject.org/



GIANCARLO ESPOSITO // ACTOR // GODFATHER OF HARLEM, NY // EPS 1,2,3,4

Giancarlo Esposito is an American actor and director. He is well known by television audiences for his iconic portrayal of drug kingpin 'Gustavo "Gus" Fring' in AMC's critically acclaimed BREAKING BAD, for which he won the 2012 Critics' Choice Award and earned a 2012 Emmy nomination. Esposito can be seen reprising his role of 'Gus Fring' on AMC's BETTER CALL SAUL, which has earned him a 2019 Emmy® Award nomination in the category of Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series.

He most recently starred as 'Moff Gideon' in the critically acclaimed Disney+ Star Wars universe series THE MANDALORIAN and as 'Adam Clayton Powell Jr.' in Chris Brancato's EPIX series GODFATHER OF HARLEM, for which he earned an NAACP Image Award nomination in the category of Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series. Additional TV credits include Amazon's THE BOYS, which returns for a second season later this year, CREEPSHOW, WESTWORLD, ONCE UPON A TIME, THE GET DOWN, DRUNK HISTORY, and COMMUNITY. He can also be seen in films such as OKJA, CODA, THE DEATH CURE, THE MAZE RUNNER, RABBIT HOLE, THE USUAL SUSPECTS, SMOKE, THE LAST HOLIDAY and Spike Lee's films DO THE RIGHT THING, MO' BETTER BLUES, SCHOOL DAZE and MALCOLM X.

A$AP FERG // HIP HOP ARTIST // EP 4

A$AP Ferg is an American rapper, singer, and songwriter from Harlem. Aside from his solo career, he is a member of the hip-hop collective A$AP Mob, from which he adopted a record deal with Polo Grounds and RCA, the same labels that helped launch A$AP Worldwide.

He has described Harlem as like a muse for him. He draws inspiration from the tradition of wanting to stand out in the neighborhood, particularly predecessors like Cam'ron and Jim Jones of Dipset. They weren't just successful because of their rapping, they also had gaudy, stylish personas. Other artists he talks about being influenced by are Missy Elliott, Pharrell, and Timbaland for their willingness to push boundaries with their music. Website: https://www.asapferg.com/

ILFENESH HADERA // ACTOR // GODFATHER OF HARLEM // EPS 1,4

Ilfenesh recently wrapped Season 2 of Spike Lee's Netflix hit series SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT, the reboot of his iconic film. Ilfenesh also recently starred as FBI Agent 'Kay Daniels' in the ABC series DECEPTION, produced by Greg Berlanti. She appeared in the award-winning HBO mini-series SHOW ME A HERO opposite Oscar Isaac. Ilfenesh is also known for her recurring role on Showtime's hit show BILLIONS playing 'Deb Kawi,' Damien Lewis' smart and steadfast assistant. Additional television credits include FX's Emmy Award winning MASTER OF NONE opposite Aziz Ansari, DIFFICULT PEOPLE (HULU) starring Julie Klausner and Billy Eichner, Marvel's THE PUNISHER, ABC's CONVICTION opposite Hayley Atwell, NBC's CHICAGO FIRE, and NBC's THE BLACKLIST.

Ilfenesh starred as 'Stephanie Holden' – Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson's love interest – in the Paramount reboot of BAYWATCH. A frequent collaborator with Spike Lee, Ilfenesh also appeared in his films CHIRAQ opposite Samuel L. Jackson and OLDBOY opposite Josh Brolin. Ilfenesh resides in Harlem, New York, where she was born and raised.

HERBIE HANDCOCK // MUSICIAN // EP 3

Herbie Hancock, a 14-time GRAMMY® Award winner and Academy Award winner, is an internationally renowned pianist and composer who has been an integral part of every jazz movement since the 1960s. As a member of the Miles Davis Quintet, Hancock became one of the pioneers of modern jazz improvisation and one of the most influential voices on the piano in the history of jazz. His recordings in the '70s combined electric jazz with funk and rock, influencing decades of music. His 1983 hit song "Rockit" established Hancock as an innovator in electronic music and inspired a generation of hip-hop artists. In 2007, he won the GRAMMY® for Album of the Year, becoming the first jazz musician to receive this honor in 44 years.
His most recent collaborations include Terrace Martin, Flying Lotus, Wayne Shorter, Kamasi Washington, Robert Glasper, Jacob Collier and Lionel Loueke. Hancock serves as UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue and is Chairman of The Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz.

JAMAL JOSEPH // CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST // BLACK PANTHER // EPS 1,2.3,4

Jamal Joseph is an American writer, director, producer, poet, activist and educator. Joseph was a member of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army. He was prosecuted as one of the Panther 21. He spent six years incarcerated at Leavenworth Penitentiary. Website:www.jamaljoseph.com

GLADYS KNIGHT // MUSICIAN // EP 1

The great ones endure, and Gladys Knight has long been one of the greatest. Very few singers over the last fifty years have matched her unassailable artistry. This seven-time GRAMMY ® -winner has enjoyed #1 hits in Pop, Gospel, R&B and Adult Contemporary, and has triumphed in film, television and live performance. Knight began her career as the lead female singer of the group Gladys Knight and the Pips. Best known for their great recordings at Motown in the late 1960s and the ballad hits they scored in the early '70s, Gladys Knight and the Pips, in fact, have had a career that encompasses the majority of rock history.

As a solo artist, Knight is known as the "*Empress of Soul*," and a longtime Las Vegas resident. In the late-2000s she performed at the famed Tropicana Hotel for a special engagement that ran in the newly named Gladys Knight Theater, making her the first African-American performer to have a venue named after her in Las Vegas. This followed a successful four-year show run at The Flamingo, which the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* praised as the number-one show on the Strip.

A humanitarian and philanthropist, Knight is devoted to various worthy causes, including the American Diabetes Association – for which she is a national spokesperson, the American Cancer Society, the Minority AIDS Project, amFAR and Crisis Intervention, and The Boys and Girls Club. She has been honored by numerous organizations as well, including the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), B'Nai Brith, and is a recent recipient of BET's Lifetime Achievement Award.

FELIPE LUCIANO // ACTIVIST, JOURNALIST, MEMBER OF THE LAST POETS AND YOUNG LORDS // EPS 2,3,4

Felipe Luciano is an American poet, community activist, journalist, media personality and politician. A two-time Emmy Award-winner for his reporting, Luciano was America's first Puerto Rican television anchor. He is the founder and chairman of the Young Lords Party, a member of The Original Last Poets, and an advocate for inter-ethnic communication.

MIGUEL "MICKEY" MELENDEZ // ACTIVIST, AUTHOR // EPS 3,4

Miguel "Mickey" Melendez, author of *We Took the Streets*, has a master's degree in public administration and has held executive positions in the New York City Health and Hospital Corporation, Housing Authority, and Department of Education. Melendez has also taught in the Hispanic Studies Department at Baruch College. He remains a committed activist for Puerto Rican rights, most recently against the resumption of bombing on Vieques. Melendez helped to form the centra committee of what would become the New York branch of the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican activist group in the 1960s. Website: https://us.macmillan.com/author/mickeymelendez/

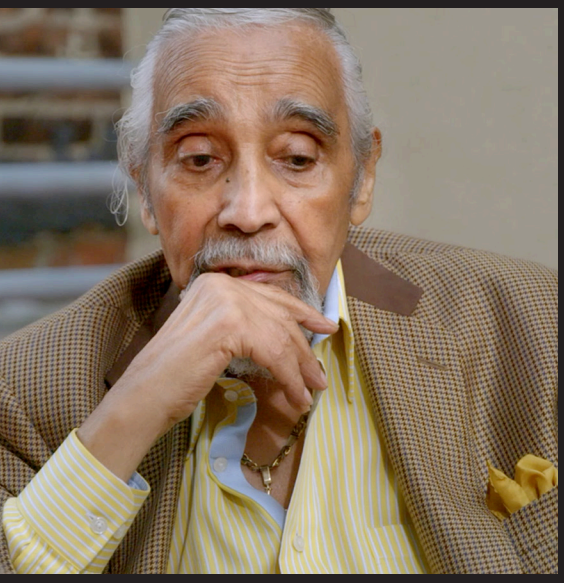
BILLY MITCHELL // HISTORIAN APOLLO THEATER // EPS 1,2

When Billy Mitchell's mom sent him to Harlem from the South Bronx in 1965, he had no idea that the trip would change his life forever. While his task was simple, borrow some money from an aunt who lived across the street from the world-famous Apollo Theater, it would set him on the path to coming face-to-face with some of the biggest names in music. Website: www.apollotheater.org

DENISE OLIVER-VELEZ // ACTIVIST, YOUNG LORDS // EPS 1,2.3,4

Denise Oliver-Velez is a powerhouse political activist, feminist, journalist, community organizer, anthropologist, and the former Minister of Economic Development of the Young Lords Party and member of the Black Panther Party. Currently she is a Contributing Editor for the Daily Kos and an adjunct Professor of Anthropology and Women's Studies at SUNY New Paltz. Website: https://muckrack.com/denise-oliver-velez

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE CHARLES RANGEL // ACTIVIST // EP 3



Charles Rangel is an American politician who was a U.S. Representative for districts in New York from 1971 to 2017. A member of the Democratic Party, he was the second-longest serving incumbent member of the House of Representatives at the time of his retirement, serving continuously since 1971. As its most senior member, he was also the Dean of New York's congressional delegation. Rangel was the first African American Chair of the influential House Ways and Means Committee. He is also a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus

SHANA L. REDMOND // UCLA PROFESSOR, MUSICOLOGIST // EPS 1,3

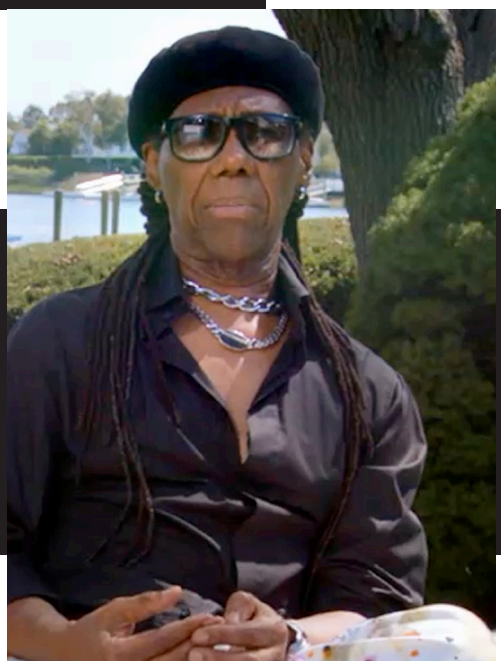
Shana L. Redmond is an interdisciplinary scholar of music, race and politics. Prior to receiving her combined Ph.D. in African American Studies and American Studies from Yale University, Redmond studied Music and African American Studies at Macalester College where she trained as a vocalist. Throughout her education and career, music has been at the center of her thinking—as subject, agent, and method—and activates her research and teaching interests in racial formation, political cultures, nationalism, labor, and decolonization.
Her focus has been to understand the ways in which music is used as a strategy within the liberation politics and social movements of the African world.
Website: http://drshanaredmond.com/

MARTHA REEVES // MUSCIAN // EPS 1,2

Martha Reeves is an American R&B and pop singer and former politician, and is the lead singer of the Motown girl group Martha and the Vandellas. They scored over a dozen hit singles, including “Come and Get These Memories,” “Nowhere to Run,” “Heat Wave,” “Jimmy Mack,” and their signature “Dancing in The Street.” After serving on the Detroit City Council as an elected councilwoman from 2005 to 2009, Reeves returned to full-time performing. She continues to perform concerts and club dates both solo and with her Vandellas - sisters Lois (Motown-era Vandella since 1967) and Delphine (since mid-1980s).
Website: http://www.missmarthareeves.com

NILE RODGERS // MUSICIAN, BLACK PANTHER // EPS 1,3,4

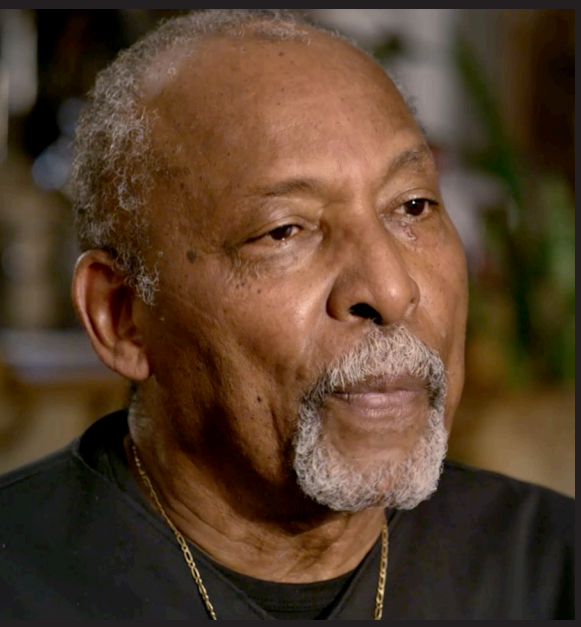
Nile Rodgers is a multiple GRAMMY®-winning composer, producer, arranger and guitarist. As the co-founder of CHIC and the newly elected Chairman of the Songwriters Hall of Fame, Rodgers pioneered a musical language that generated chart-topping hits like “Le Freak,” (the biggest selling single in the history of Atlantic Records!) and sparked the advent of hip-hop with “Good Times.” Rodgers transcends all styles of music across every generation with a body of work that’s garnered him inductions into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame (2017) and the Songwriters Hall of Fame (2016).
Website: http://www.nilerodgers.com/



REVERAND AL SHARPTON // FOUNDER & PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK // EPS 1,2,4

The Reverend Al Sharpton is an internationally renowned civil rights leader, founder and President of the National Action Network (NAN), which has more than 100 chapters across the country. Hailed by former President Barack Obama as a “champion for the downtrodden,” Reverend Sharpton is the host of “Politics Nation” on MSNBC; a nationally syndicated daily radio show “Keepin’ It Real”; and a nationally broadcast radio show on Sunday titled, “The Hour of Power.” A disciple of the teachings of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Reverend Sharpton has been at the forefront of the modern civil rights movement for nearly a half of a century. He has championed police reform and accountability, calling for the elimination of unjust policies like “Stop-and-Frisk.” He also fights for voting rights, equity in education and healthcare and LGBTQ rights. Website: https://nationalactionnetwork.net

DR. JAMES SMALLS // PAN-AFRICANIST, ACTIVIST // EPS 1,2,3,4



Dr. James Small is a scholar, activist, dynamic speaker and organizational consultant. He is CEO of Sanaa Lodge Enterprise, Ghana, Ltd.; CEO & President, African-American Management Company, Ghana, Ltd.; International Vice-President, Organization of Afro-American Unity (O.A.A.U.); Priest of Oya, Babalorisha, Ifa Tradition; and past President of the Eastern Region of the Association for the study of Classical African Civilization (ASCAC). For eleven years Small served as principal bodyguard to the late Ella L. Collins, the sister of Malcolm X, the then President of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (O.A.A.U.) Small taught for fifteen years at CUNY, including 13 years at the City College of New York's Black Studies Department and two years at New York City Technical College.

MARKUANN SMITH // ACTOR // CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, GODFATHER OF HARLEM // EP 4

Markuann Smith has had roles on the "Chapelle Show", as well as movies such as *Juice, Poetic Justice* and Code Blue, and the award-winning short film *A Good Day to Die*. He has also hosted the "All Hip Hop" TV segment on the AllHipHop.com website and was recently tapped to be featured in the upcoming VH-1 series starring rapper Pepa, entitled "Let's Talk About Pep".

WARREN SMITH // MUSCIAN // EPS 1,2,3

Warren Smith is an American jazz drummer, percussionist and composer, known as a contributor to Max Roach's M'boom ensemble and leader of the Composer's Workshop Ensemble. Smith has had one of the most varied careers of any improvising drummer, working with artists as diverse as Sam Rivers, Aretha Franklin, Van Morrison, Bill Cole and Harry Partch. Though originally trained in modern classical percussion, jazz and improvised music became paramount after moving to New York in the late '50s. Smith also opened one of the first and longest-running performance lofts, Studio WIS, in 1967.

EUNICE TOWNSEND // GRANDASSA MODEL// EPS 2,3,4

Eunice Townsend is a former Grandassa model, a group of African American women and men who promoted the "Black is Beautiful" movement from 1962 to 1979. The Grandassa Models sported their natural hair and celebrated Afrocentric fashions. Following her modeling career, Townsend went on to study speech and language pathology.

FORREST WHITAKER // ACTOR, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER // EPS 2,3,4

Forest Whitaker, one of Hollywood's most accomplished actors, directors, and producers, has showcased his talents in a multitude of demanding and diverse roles. In 2007, he earned critical acclaim for his performance as Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in *The Last King of Scotland*, receiving the Academy Award®, BAFTA Award, SAG Award, and Golden Globe Award for Best Actor. His intensive character work in films such as Lee Daniels' *The Butler, The Crying Game, Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, and *Bird*, for which he was named Best Actor at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival, have made him one of the most versatile performers of all time.

In television, Whitaker currently serves as executive producer and star of the critically acclaimed EPIX series "Godfather of Harlem" that tells the true story of crime boss Bumpy Johnson (Whitaker). The role earned him a NAACP Image Award nomination, one of four for the series. He recently had a multi-episode arc on Fox's Empire, playing a charismatic and duplicitous music icon and hitmaker. Whitaker also garnered an Emmy Award for Door to Door where he served as an executive producer. Recent films include *Black Panther*; Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi drama *Arrival*; *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* alongside Felicity Jones; *The Forgiven* and Netflix's How It Ends. Up next, he will be seen in Burden opposite Tom Wilkinson, the upcoming Netflix holiday film *Jingle Jangle* directed by David E. Talbert and Respect, the life story of the legendary Aretha Franklin.

THE FILMMAKERS

Keith McQuirter, Director/Executive Producer
By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem

@keithmcquirter

Keith McQuirter is an award-winning producer and director with credits in TV documentary, digital media and commercials. Recently, he produced three episodes of the docu-series “The Innocence Files” that debuted on Netflix in Spring 2020. He directed and produced the documentary “MILWAUKEE 53206” that aired on WORLD Channel’s America ReFramed and won Best Feature Documentary at the 2017 Urbanworld Film Festival. Keith co-produced the Peabody Award winning and Emmy® nominated docu-series “Brick City” for the Sundance Channel. He is currently directing a documentary about criminal justice in co-production with ITVS. An innovative advertising executive producer, Keith’s NY-based production company, Decoder Media produces commercials for national and global brands in entertainment, apparel, beauty, food and consumer products.

Keith studied film and television production at New York University Tisch School of the Arts where he was awarded the Martin Scorsese Young Filmmaker Award. He also studied directing at the National Theater Institute.

Nina Yang Bongiovi & Forest Whitaker, Significant Productions, Executive Producers *By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem*

@NYBongiovi

@forestwhitaker

Producing partners, Forest Whitaker & Nina Yang Bongiovi have gained a stellar reputation for having in-depth knowledge of film financing, creative and physical producing, and a knack for discovering talent, like that of Ryan Coogler (*Marvel's Black Panther*), whose first film, *Fruitvale Station* (2013) was produced by Forest and Nina.

Together under their banner, Significant Productions, Nina and Forest have produced a number of critically-acclaimed films by auteur filmmakers, including *Dope* (2015) by Rick Famuyiwa, Songs My Brothers Taught Me (2015) by Chloe Zhao, *Roxanne Roxanne* (2018) by Michael Larnell, and *Sorry To Bother You* (2018) by Boots Riley. More recently, Forest and Nina produced Rebecca Hall's directorial debut, Passing, based on Nella Larsen's renowned Harlem Renaissance novel and starring Tessa Thompson, Ruth Negga, Andre Holland and Alexander Skarsgard. The producing duo is currently executive producing the premium TVv series, "Godfather of Harlem," which is in production on Season 2 at EPIX/ABC Studios. Nina and Forest are also in active development on a diverse slate of multi-cultural feature films and television projects that they love.

Significant Productions' mission is to create opportunities and push inclusivity for underrepresented narratives and storytellers by championing culturally-significant films and television shows starring BIPOC talent, alongside diversified representation behind the camera.

Forest is a member of The Academy of the Motion Picture Arts & Sciences (AMPAS), and the Television Academy. He notably received the Oscar for Best Actor for his performance in *The Last King of Scotland*. Forest actively serves as a Special Envoy in Conflict Resolution for the United Nations, through his foundation, The Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative.

Nina is a board member of Film Independent, The Oscar Grant Foundation, Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment (CAPE), and The Producers Guild of America. She is also a member of The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences' (AMPAS) Producers Branch and the Television Academy. She is fluent in Mandarin, Chinese, and received her graduate degree in Entertainment Management from the Annenberg School at the University of Southern California.

Kasseem “Swizz Beatz” Dean, Executive Producer *By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem*

@therealswizzz

Swizz Beatz executive produced and created the soundtrack to “The Godfather of Harlem” airing on EPIX. He has produced hit singles for a number of prominent artists across different music genres, such as hip hop, pop, soul and R&B. With a career spanning two decades, his catalog includes Ruff Ryders’ “Anthem” and “Party Up” (DMX), “Gotta Man” (Eve), “Jigga My Nigga” and “Girl’s Best Friend” (Jay-Z), “Upgrade U,” “Check on It” and “Ring the Alarm” (Beyoncé), “Good Times” (Styles P), “Bring ‘Em Out” and “Swing Ya Rag” (T.I.), “Hotel” and “I’m a Hustla” (Cassidy), “Touch It” (Busta Rhymes) and “Ultralight Beam” (Kanye West), among others.

Cyndee Readdean, Series Producer *By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem*

@Readdean

Cyndee Readdean is an award-winning director, producer and writer. She directed episode two of the Alfred I. du-Pont-Columbia Award-winning PBS documentary series “Reconstruction: America after the Civil War”, directed and produced the Emmy-nominated ABC documentary “1969: The FBI and the Panther”, produced the Peabody Award-winning PBS documentary “Freedom Summer”, and the Emmy-nominated PBS documentary “Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Black Colleges and Universities”. Additionally, Readdean produced 15 permanent exhibit films for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and served as the story producer for “Blackout”, the Tribeca Film Festival premiering virtual reality documentary series.

Asako Gladsjo, Senior Producer *By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem*

@asakogladsjo

Leslie Asako Gladsjo is an award-winning documentary director, producer, and writer. Her recent credits include Why We Hate for Jigsaw Productions and Amblin Entertainment; “(Un)Well” for Netflix and Left/Right; the Emmy-nominated PBS special “Black America Since MLK: And Still I Rise”; Soundtracks for CNN, Show of Force and Seven Bucks Productions; and the acclaimed six-hour PBS series “The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross”, which won Emmy, DuPont, Peabody, and NAACP Image awards as well as multiple seasons of Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s “Finding Your Roots and African American Lives”. In addition to her work in the United States, she has made many documentaries on social and cultural topics for international broadcasters including Arte, BBC, France 2 and France 5 while based in Paris.

THE MAKING OF BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY: THE TIMES OF GODFATHER OF HARLEM

Q&A

with Keith McQuirter

Q: What inspired you to make this docuseries?

Keith: There was so much incredible music that came out of the 60s. I love the music of Curtis Mayfield, Nina Simone, James Brown, John Coltrane and Motown; it has always been part of my life. My parents would play Motown while I was growing up and they still do. So, this music has been part of my family's soundtrack since I was young.

So, when the producers of "Godfather of Harlem" were seeking ways to tell the real-life story of Harlem during the 1960s, music was a unique gateway to explore the undercurrents of that time period when it came to racial injustice and the pursuit of civil rights. What I love about "Godfather of Harlem" is they did an incredible job of bringing historical figures to life like Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Malcolm X, who I revere as giants when it comes to civil rights. There is also Bumpy Johnson, who operated in the criminal world, and who represents a form of resistance against white oppression when it came to economic empowerment. Through the personal stories in "Godfather of Harlem" young people get to explore these historical figures beyond the black and white photographs and get to know them as real people. They also get to explore the issues that were present to Black people in Harlem and across the country at that time -- the pursuit of economic opportunity despite barriers to black success, the fight for equal rights and against institutional racism, and the audacity of Black pride in America. The series really set the stage for **By Whatever Means Necessary** to examine this time period in our country from the point-of-view of Harlem residents.

And, Harlem was a useful frame for looking at what happened to Black Americans in the 1960s. I'm not from Harlem, but I understand the symbolic importance of Harlem as one of America's most prominent Black cultural centers. It allowed me to show how residents of this one community looked at what was happening across the country during this pivotal time in history.

So, I was thrilled to dive into the activism and music by Black artists during this period. Especially, with the events that unfolded this year and the proliferation of protest music by young artists today, there is a clear linkage of the struggle then and the struggle now. This is the moment to bring this story to the world.

I'm always asking the question: Who are our heroes? Because when we look at history, and listen to the people who lived, worked and fought on the frontlines for change, they give us a good roadmap to where we are today, based on where we came from. And, when I talk about heroes, I'm talking about the eyewitnesses from that time, who didn't always have influence or fame or wealth, but had the courage to speak to power or express themselves in ways that empowered the people. And this is what was inspiring about making this series, because it explores both the politics and the music's influence on culture from Black America's cultural capital, Harlem. This framing gave us a lens to go deep into Black revolutionary culture, and I'm not talking just about what we've come to understand as resistance in its iconic form such as marches or outdoor protests. But in ordinary and extraordinary ways, people used whatever they had to stand against being classified as second class citizens, and so they raised their families to be proud and Black, they organized in their churches and mosques and sang songs of freedom, they created businesses that supported the culture of the community, and they celebrated life despite oppression. And, Harlem was a place where Black people could be free of cultural shame and be unapologetically Black. The music reflected their pains, hopes, and dreams, while honoring themselves as heroes. Bringing a story like this into the world is not only inspiring to me, but I hope it gives some understanding of who we are and where we are in America today.

Q: The various styles of music coming out of the 1960s made an indelible impact on American culture that still resonates in 2020. Why do you think that music still speaks to people?

Keith: Many of the issues BIPOC Americans were fighting for in the 1960s we are still fighting today, and people feel this. The desire to live free of the oppression of racism, to have equal rights, economic opportunities and to be empowered to love our culture, our skin, our hair, our joy. These things are still considered radical by many, even in 2020. The musicians of the 1960s reflected these values in their music and we still have those values and feel in our bodies and understand in our spirits the message in the music. This is why the music still speaks to people today.

When I listen to Gil Scott Heron's Whitey on the Moon, he was speaking about how the white power structure was using science to conquer the universe by landing a man on the moon in 1969. While here on earth, and in Harlem, folks were starving, and many were dealing with day-to-day survival. The discrepancy of values back then, exists similarly with America's race to Mars and to find extraterrestrial beings, but here at home we can't even solve gun violence, mass incarceration or global warming in any basic way.

It's also worth noting that as music technology in instrumentation changes over time, and the styles of music progress, sometimes we forget just how radical some of these songs were for their time. When we hear Chubby Checker's The Twist it's a fun pop song from the early 1960s, but it also was a weapon for change in integrating Black and White communities across America. Not everyone realizes the message in the music or its cultural significance in battling racism.

Felipe Luciano, who is featured in the docuseries, was a member of The Last Poets and the Young Lord, said "culture is the spear tip of revolution". And the 1960s saw the cultural triumph of Black America even though economic and political equality remained elusive. To understand the power of music to shape culture, change hearts and minds we couldn't tell this story without James Brown who came out with Say it Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud) in 1969. It became an anthem for the movement and people in Harlem and across the country felt empowered in new ways – African prints, dashikis and natural hair in Afros became the fashion. The Grandassa Models out of Harlem emerged with the Black is Beautiful movement, where Black women embraced their own standard of beauty that the white run media had never reflected or even acknowledged. By using art, fashion, music, and political thought it created the foundation for a generation no longer willing to accept the status quo of second-class citizenry, so they embraced their Blackness and stood up to power and fought for the change they wanted for themselves, their families and their communities.

Q: Today, as in the 1960s, America is tackling the issues of racial inequality and social injustice. In the process of making this documentary, were there any moments that resonated, shocked or surprised you?

Keith: There were plenty that resonated, shocked and surprised me. When you undertake a massive amount of research and go deep into the subject matter, it's fascinating what you find. One of the stories that was surprising to me was the response after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. One interviewee, Courtland Cox who was a SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] organizer, expressed the fear he felt when he learned of King's assassination. He asked how can a man who preached nonviolence and peace be shot and killed? How could anybody feel safe? And with the cities rioting over the outrage of King's death, Richard Nixon promised to restore law-and-order and won the presidency because many whites believed he'd bring back the old America again. All this was strangely familiar given the times we are in now.

What was unexpected and inspiring, was learning how the children's program "Sesame Street," which I grew up watching, was created in response to King's death. Joan Ganz Clooney, a television producer in New York, responded to the need of Americans looking to do something after watching nightly the divisions and uprisings on television. So, she created "Sesame Street," a daily children's show that took place on a block in Harlem and used music as a teaching tool. It had a diverse cast of Black and Latinx teenagers, many who were actually from Harlem. Sesame Street became part of the fabric of American life in the late 20th century, like the air we breathe, so it's easy to forget that in 1969 BIPOC people were rarely seen on television. With "Sesame Street," they were not only represented, but they were in living rooms across America educating kids through the rhythms and instrumentation of Black music while teaching them their colors, ABC's and 123's. As a television producer and director, I was fascinated to learn how "Sesame Street" and its music was created as a weapon for positive change.

Q: For this series you've put together a creative team and crew consisting of people of color. Have your experiences as a Black man impacted your approach to documentary filmmaking?

Keith: There are so many stories being told through documentaries, but rarely from a Black person's perspective. And when it comes to stories like By Whatever Means Necessary, there are cultural nuances and areas that I consider to be sacred history. I have a real desire to share with the world the incredible diversity of thought, values and lifestyles within the Black community. I also am well aware of the limited perception people have about African Americans and Africans in the diaspora. The stories I choose to tell, I hope will shed light on the truth of who we are as human beings.

Coming from my background, where I grew up one of the few Black kids in predominantly white environments, you never really fit in, you're always the other. And, very few know much about your culture or heritage outside media stereotypes and prejudices. And, because of this I was in a unique position to be an observer of culture and of popular thinking around me. As I was born into a different culture than that of my friends and classmates, and I straddled both lines. So, from a young age, I had an outsider's perspective; I knew what life was like for the underrepresented because of my own experiences. Perhaps this is what inspired me into storytelling, I cared to understand multiple perspectives. And, this is what's important when building a creative team. I want to work with folks who aren't sleepwalking through the culture and taking everything at face value, but who empathize and have the ability to question. People who are unafraid to investigate and seek truth and bring it into the world. These are the people I'm excited to work with every day, it's the variety of backgrounds and experiences that challenge storytelling in all the best ways.

But I will also say that it's important that Black filmmakers have the opportunity to tell their own stories about their own communities; they should not be limited to just telling those stories. There is a whole magnitude of stories about the world from one perspective. When you have people of color who reflect the diversity of America tell those stories as well, it gives a new perspective. And their viewpoint could bring new insights that people have not seen before. When there is more representation of filmmakers telling stories, the richer our understanding of the world becomes, and everyone benefits.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem is directed by Keith McQuirter and executive produced by Forest Whitaker, Nina Yang Bongiovi, Keith McQuirter, Swizz Beatz, Michael Wright and Jill Burkhart.

Director
Keith McQuirter

Series Producer
Cyndee Readdean

Senior Producer
Asako Gladsjo

Executive Producers
Keith McQuirter
Forest Whitaker
Nina Yang Bongiovi
Swizz Beatz
Michael Wright
Jill Burkhart

Co-Executive Producers
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Paul Eckstein
Markuann Smith
James Acheson

Director of Photography
Derek Wiesenhahn

Original Score by
Roger Suen

Editors
AMPeters
Mariah Rehmet
Lucas Groth
Kimberly Tomes
Yasu Inoue
Jason Pollard

Consulting Producer
Rachel Watanabe-Batton

Production Supervisor
Linda Saffire

Story Producer
Danielle Dabney

Associate Producers
Melissa Leardi
Pilar McQuirter
Kevin Garnett

Line Producers
Michelle Budnick
Rebecca Ehrhardt

Production Manager
Marco Nerlini

Field Producer
Jun Stinson

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Matt Barth
Tom Bergmann
Matt Garland
Jerry Henry
Jendra Jarnagin
Ian McGlocklin
Ryan Nethery
Paul Niccolls

Assistant Camera
Jonathan Arturo
Eusebio Cabrera
Allen Hrynick
Shane McMurphy
Joshua Miller
Allen Thorogood

Media Managers
Stephen Deropp
Brandon Kelley
Kevin Rogers

BTS Photographers
Brenten Brandenburg
Max Grudzinski
Hannah Mattner

Sound Mixers
Emily Strong
Brian Buckley
Nikola Chapelle
Kevin Crawford
Michael Eagle-Hall
Aaron Eschenburg
Pasquin Mariani
Redd Reynolds
David Sickles

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Seth Beabout
Tim Burk
Tiffany Edmondson
Jasmine Janifer
Joshua Miller
Marissa Palmeri
Daniel Pierre-Louis
Dan Schroeder
Jacob Skaggs
Tim Sturtevant
Matthew Vandenelst
Smij Willi

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Eusebio Cabrera
Joshua Makela

Archival Producers
Sam Aleshinloye
Natalie Shmeul

Archival AP
Ariel Kay

Archival Researchers
Wyatt Stone
Aimee O'Neill

Archival Assistant
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Post Production Supervisor
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Post Production Coordinator
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Jonathan Branden

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Allie Keefer
Mia Milosevic
Collin Cash

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Robin Urdang

Music Supervising Producer
Kawan “KP” Prather

Vocalist
Jazmin Crumley

Opening Title Sequence & Motion Design and VFX
Daniel de Graaf Design

Art Director
Daniel de Graaf

Graphic Artist
Ryan Frost

Graphic Artist
Chris King

Assistant
Alyce Emory

Post Production Services
Final Frame

Colorist
SJ Rogers Smith

Re-Recording Mixer
Arjun G. Sheth

Sound Effects Editor
Patrick Burgess

Digital Intermediate Manager
Drew Kilgore

Digital Intermediate & Audio Producer
Kate C Albers

Digital Intermediate Technical Supervisor
Sandy Patch

Digital Intermediate Executive Producer
Will Cox

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Cowan DeBaets Abrahams & Shappard, LLP
Frederick P. Bimbler, Amy Stein, Novika Ishar

Production Accountant
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