

**Organization of
Black
Screenwriters,
Inc.**

OBS WRITER

Volume 1, Issue 1

March 25, 2008

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The New OBS	1
Message from President	2
What you Missed	3
Meet the Member	3
Kim's Korner	4
Spotlight On	5
What's Next?	6



*Jennifer Williams, OBS President
and Kim Allen, OBS Vice President
(l-r).*

A New Year, a New OBS!

With newly elected officers, the Organization of Black Screenwriters (OBS) looks forward to the upcoming New Year with its new board of directors, and a new agenda.

On December 2, 2007, members of the Organization of Black Screenwriters – OBS, held their annual elections and chose new officers to lead the organization for the '08 calendar year. Jennifer Williams replaced Sylvia Franklin as President. Jennifer, a screenwriter and novelist, plans to take OBS to the next level, "I plan to assist OBS in moving forward as an organization, taking the necessary steps to move this entity to the next level in the community and industry". She brings with her 15 years of writing experience, and 20 years of administrative and organization skills both in the public and private sector. Kimberly Allen was elected Vice President, and takes reigns from Doug Jackson. Kim has been a member of OBS for 8 years, and has achieved numerous accomplishments such as being named a finalist in the Disney/ABC Screenwriting Fellowship and the Cosby Program, "I aim to show writers the importance of reaching out and investing in the dreams of others, especially after having success in the industry." JaSheika James, elected as Secretary, hopes not only to maintain the current duties, but also to act as ambassador for OBS, "I want to inform and encourage others about the advantages of membership, and also bring new ideas to the organization."

The new officers plan to continue the mission of assisting screenwriters in the creation of works for film and television and to help them present their work to the industry. But also adding to its purpose, OBS will seek to move into production of members' works via webcasts, iPod downloads, and DVDs with the support of Sylvia Franklin, former President, and the OBS Board of Directors.

- Learn how to become a part of OBS.
- Hear what it's like to write on a hit television series.
- Get up to speed on the happenings at OBS.
- See what's coming up.



Message from the President



A NEW ERA, THIS IS NOT THE “OLD HOLLYWOOD” ANYMORE

No, it’s “Not the Old Hollywood, Anymore” - if you’re not sure this is true, just check the latest Box Office; read the trades; review the settlement that assisted to end the writer’s strike, and check the current network television line-ups! Oh wait, I forgot...check the Internet, PodCast, cable networks, You Tube, and more...

One of my goals for OBS, as we embark on a new era, is to reach out to all members, not only in Los Angeles but throughout the country and overseas. This will be a tall undertaking, but not impossible. In this new era we have come to learn that it is not **only** writing that matters, but relationships. Relationships are built through networks such as OBS.

The first step in any networking model is communication. OBS communicates in various ways through the website:

- emails through OBS Communiqués that promote opportunities,
- Job announcements,
- contests,
- fellowships,
- internships, etc.

We network by simply informing writers and building relationships/collaborations. OBS will continue to network through the development of an online presence through My Space and Blog Spot.

The new era design in networking goes farther than just attending the meetings. It encompasses the organizing of Writers’ Groups in each represented area; either physical or virtual followed by Dramatic Table Reads with actors, to allow writers the opportunity to hear their story through their characters. The next step sends the writer and his work to our Script Development.

The new era also brings with it a new model for production. There are so many areas to showcase your work as a writer in the final stage of production. There are DVDs; Webisodes; You Tube; Internet Programming; and hand-held devices, phones and iPods. With all these at your disposal you can test the water before you attempt to pitch your material for the “Big Deal” and OBS is positioning itself to be the tool that assists every member in making it happen.

Yes, it’s a new era in Hollywood, but the old ways still exist. Writers, write and then rewrite, re-write, and rewrite again – but they **must** build relationships to reach the ultimate goal.

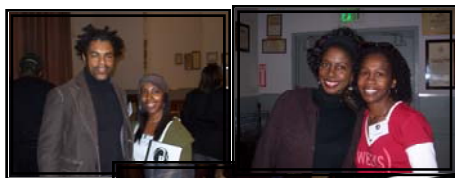
See you April 5th!

Keep Writing...

Jennifer Williams, President



What You Missed?



OBS Members at our monthly meetings



2nd Dramatic Table Read



Casee Maxfield, OBS Original Script Contest Winner



OBS Founder, Bozana Belokosa



Laurence Andries speaks to members of OBS

ORGANIZATION OF BLACK SCREENWRITERS

Meet the Member



Who are you and where are you from?

L. C. Cruell
I am from South Carolina, but currently live in Atlanta, GA.

How long have you been a member of OBS?

Several years, since I entered and was one of the winners in an OBS script contest for a chance to meet with and pitch to a gathering of agents and producers brought together by OBS. That was one of my first trips to L.A.

What do you write and why?

I write screenplays, television specs, pilots, shorts, short stories, etc. The genre varies from sci-fi/action to comedy to dark fantasy and beyond. Currently, I am focusing more on horror as I believe this genre is a better bet for beginning screenwriters to break into. Plus, I love horror, so it's a win/win.

What is your writing strategy?

Write well. Write fast.
Enjoy it. Finish it. Let it go.
Talk it. Send it. Talk it. Send it.
Then move on to the next idea.

What is the best advice you've received as a writer?

Though I am loathe to repeat it, because I hated it so much at the time, it did in fact turn out to be true – "Persistence. Persistence. Persistence." It takes time to become an overnight success. To develop your writing style. To find your voice. To create an outstanding body of work. To make a network of contacts that know you and that believe in you and your work.

But this persistence has to apply not just to continuing to write and bettering your writing, but preparing yourself, your whole life, for the success you want to achieve. Write and write better, but also become a better networker, better marketer, better pitcher, better at getting, receiving, and utilizing feedback. Become healthier, stronger in mind and body. Take care of yourself inside and out. Work to pay off your debts. Work out. Build strong friendships and relationships. Have some fun. It may sound guruish but if you grow as a person while you grow as a writer, not letting frustration, or your day job, or too many hours staring at a computer screen weigh you down, when the opportunity comes you will be able to snatch it up, hold it tight, use it to its fullest and its best, and then make more from it. You will know what to do and have the confidence and readiness to do it. I'm not sure that's how the advice was meant, but it's how it has worked for me.

What are your goals / dreams?

Ahhh, so many. I have four scripts (going on five) that I am currently marketing, I hope to sell a script within the year. I have several short scripts, I hope to see one made within the year. I have several series pilots, my favorite I hope to be underway on as a showrunner within three to five years. I plan to get a place in L.A. by year's end and become bicoastal. I will complete a new screenplay or project every two months until this all happens, and probably after. All of my previous scripts are contest top finalists or winners, I intend for all of the new ones to be as well. There are other goals related to politics, entrepreneurial ventures, other types of writing, and my webstore RedStateResistance.Com [Blue Political Action Wear and Gear for '08]. An Oscar, an Emmy, a Pulitzer someday, possibly even a Tony, would be nice. And, of course, there is the great dream of being successful in my career and happy and healthy with my happy, healthy family and friends around me, truly enjoying every moment of my life in the way I believe we were all meant to. Preferably, near a beach.



KIM'S KORNER OBS, 2008 IS YOUR YEAR!

If screenwriting is in your blood, then this is your year! I know that some of you have left family, friends and foe to pursue your lifelong dream as a screenwriter. "Am I crazy?" may be the predominant, reoccurring question that you ask yourself at times. Who would want to work in a fickle business, where selling a script is probably as likely as winning the lottery? Some of your most well-meaning friends may even call your ambition a pipedream. But no matter what the cost of cranking out scene after scene, you can't get enough of telling stories for the big or small screen.

The truth is you believe that your story is worth telling the world; otherwise you'd be at home writing in a vacuum and tossing your script in a drawer. Maybe we all need to take a second look at our process to make this year ours. I'd be the first to admit, I want that "big break" to just happen tomorrow morning. But without modifying the process and considering new strategies, we may be prolonging our dream. The saying goes that if you continue to do the same thing time and time again, and you expect different results, then just maybe you are crazy after all.

Having listened to the various writers who've spoken at OBS, we know that there is no cookie-cutter equation to being successful in this business. Honing your writing skills is a given and being persistent is a necessity. But beyond that, what else is there?

TEAMWORK

Being a "team-player" is probably one of the most over used words in

corporate America. But if OBS members were truly committed to the overall success of the organization and their fellow writer, I'm convinced we'd be a lot more successful in our individual quests. Through OBS Writers Groups and Script Development, we can offer professional and structured criticism to improve in the areas of our writing that we need to make stronger. Also, working together on projects, pitching in and helping on committees and establishing a genuine interest in our fellow members catapults OBS to the forefront in many ways and creates a spirit of unity.

EXPOSURE

OBS is striving to give our members the proper exposure through staged readings, Movie Night, contests and encouraging them to submit to writing fellowship programs. In addition, we are striving to gain alliances with members of the entertainment community in an effort to develop long-lasting relationships with production companies and studio networks.

COLLABORATION

While most workshops, speakers and projects revolve exclusively around screenwriting, OBS encourages you to embrace the collaborative process. By incorporating acting workshops to learn how writing impacts the actor is just one of many useful approaches to honing your craft. OBS is also, for the first time ever, branching out through our production committee, and producing our own feature films. What better way to take ownership of your work, than to bring



to life the words written on the page? It also brings writers to a new level of appreciation for the collaborative process that is inherent in this business.

GRATITUDE

Gratitude goes a long way. There are many people in the business who have done something to make it a little easier for us to move to the next level. Remember to tell that person thank you, knowing that one day you'll have the opportunity to pave the way for someone else.

Through teamwork, exposure, collaboration and gratitude, one must conclude that going forward incorporating these few basic steps is certain to make writing a much more rewarding process and will greatly increase the opportunity for success for us individually and as an organization. With your help this will be an enriching experience for us all. OBS this is your year!

"Honing your writing skills is a given and being persistent is a necessity".



Spotlight on...

Tracy Grant

"You have to want and embrace that kind of work, and that kind of drive-focus, whatever you want to call it. That's what it's going to take to get there, but also to stay there. You have to want it, there's no way around it". – Tracy Grant

If there was a recipe for success, Tracy Grant would probably reveal that the ingredients consist of persistence, talent, sacrifice, and a little bit of luck. That combination alone got him onto the critically acclaimed hit series "Lincoln Heights" as a staff writer – beginning his journey into the world of screenwriting. Tracy began his career as a freelance journalist, writing for magazines such as *Today's Black Woman*, *XXL*, and *Black Issues Book Review*. It was after writing and self-publishing his novel, *Hellified*, and wanting to adapt it into a feature, that he became seriously interested in screenwriting as a career.

When did you decide to write for television?

"I was interested in screenwriting, but I didn't see a lot of outlets for writers at the time. I decided to work on my writing and try to get better. Try to learn how to do it and what it would take. In one of many screenwriting classes that I took, the teacher said 'The best work these days is being done on TV, particularly on the drama side'. That really stuck with me because most of the things I enjoyed were on TV --- The Sopranos, Law & Order, etc. That's what got me thinking about TV".

How does it feel to be apart of a hit show?

"It feels good, because it is a great show. I don't know of any other show that combines the best elements of family, teen, and crime drama. The show is real and relevant without being preachy. We offer a lot to people who like great writing".

How did you feel when your first written episode premiered?

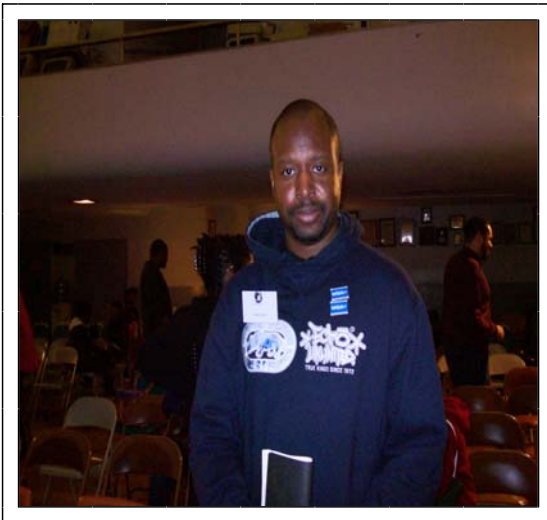
"I was thrilled, and very humbled. I was fortunate, the episode I was given to write really worked for me creatively. I had the character Eddie doing a lot of cop stuff with a lot of action involved. I had gotten to see how the script turned out because I was onset for most of it. It was a head trip just to see it on air. The fact that it was good, and the fact that I made my showrunner happy, and my colleagues happy felt really good---that was a very special night---that's why you work so hard".

What are your long term goals?

"I want to sell a one-hour pilot, become a showrunner, and see my show on the air. I want to distinguish myself from other staff writers out there. I'd like to return to novels because as much as I love TV, there are things about characters that you don't have the space in a script to service. As far as my immediate future, I see myself on a writing staff as a story editor or beyond --- doing the work. I understand the barriers to entry, and that you must do the work in order to stay in".

What advice would you give an aspiring television writer?

"That you have to stay persistent. Whatever is going on, you always want to be working on new material. Remember that good isn't good enough---your material needs to be CRAZY. Come with something to offer".



Lincoln Heights writer and OBS member, Tracy Grant

What's Next?

OBS General Body Meeting—April 5th

OBS 3rd Dramatic Table Read—April 19th

OBS General Body Meeting— May 3rd

OBS Movie Night—May 15th

OBS General Body Meeting— June 7th

OBS Family Picnic—June 14th

We're on the Web!

www.obswriter.com

<http://obswriter.blogspot.com/>



1999 West Adams Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90018-3500

Phone: 323.735.2050
Fax: 626.821.4641
E-mail: jwilliams@obswriter.com

**ORGANIZATION OF BLACK
SCREENWRITERS, INC.**

Keep writing....

Mission Statement

"The goal of this non-profit organization is to develop great writers. We desire to empower our members with intense training, hands-on experience, expansive resources and extensive industry exposure. We encourage freedom of expression via quality writing and filmmaking, without compromising the image of people of color."

OBS is headquartered in Los Angeles, with new chapters on the horizon for Chicago, Atlanta, Washington D.C., and New York. OBS' general meetings take place the 1st Saturday of every month at the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building on Adams & Western in Los Angeles (in the historically rich section of town).

These are just a few of our Member Benefits:

- Numerous networking opportunities for all members in film, TV and emerging media
- Access to hard-to-obtain industry information, resources and employment opportunities
- Participation in OBS sanctioned writers groups
- Writer workshops/seminars
- Community, one that nurtures you while you pursue your dream

OBS Officers

President—Jennifer Williams
jwilliams@obswriter.com

Vice President—Kim Allen
kallen@obswriter.com

Secretary—JaSheika James
jjames@obswriter.com

=====

Treasurer—Toya D. Ayda
Membership Coordinator
– Raenell Jones
rjones@obswriter.com

OBS Committees

- Executive Committee**
- Development Committee**
- Communications Committee**
- Membership Committee**
- Production Committee**
- Education Committee & Library**
- Social Committee**
- Outreach Committee**
- Bylaws Committee**
- Nominating Committee**

