



# YES, AND...LAUGHTER LAB

## IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

### WHAT IS IT?

The *Yes And...Laughter Lab* (YALL) is a competitive incubation lab, pitch program and showcase that lifts up the best writers and performers creating subversive comedy about topics that matter, with a focus on traditionally marginalized creatives. The Lab is designed to introduce these comedians to the entertainment industry, social justice organizations, philanthropists and activists who can help bring their work into the comedy marketplace—and into movements for social change.

### WHY NOW?

The entertainment industry is changing, welcoming new creative talent to fill expanding platforms for wide audience distribution, opening doors to stories and voices that have been excluded. Social justice activism is also transforming; creativity and entertainment are necessities, not luxuries, when it comes to engaging publics. YALL brings these worlds together.

### WHY COMEDY?

We know from research—ours and others—that comedy is a uniquely important mechanism for social justice and change. It breaks down taboos, humanizes those who are “othered,” creates resilience in the face of trauma, gently persuades through positive emotions, and provides memorable, hilarious, attention-getting ways to invite us to see one another and engage with daunting, complex social challenges. Comedy works symbiotically with journalism and other traditional forms of public engagement. Too often, comedy is left out of the conversation about art for social justice, but we need it desperately.

### WHAT'S THE INTERVENTION?

The *Yes, And...Laughter Lab* disrupts old gatekeeper systems and builds social capital for marginalized comedy creators by fostering and strengthening community networks, facilitating pitch and professional development training, and providing access to entertainment industry decision-makers and social justice movement leaders.



**YES, AND  
LAUGHTER LAB**

# YALL SPOTLIGHTS

Since 2019, about 1,400 applications have moved through YALL, which says something about the tremendous need for this programming—and the wealth of hilarious comedy talent with something to say about the world. In the time since our launch, YALL has worked closely with more than 70 individual comedy writers and performers. Of these finalists and winners, 77% are queer, nonbinary, or BIPOC, and 59% are women-identifying; all groups that remain marginalized in the comedy world and the wider entertainment industry. In 2021, we launched YALL Community, the first-ever database of diverse writers and performers creating subversive comedy projects. A few spotlight stories help to tell the story of YALL's expanding influence and impact:



## MURF MEYER *MURF MEYER IS SELF-MEDICATED (YALL 2019)*

**Logline:** *Murf is a former heroin addict and current alcoholic with twenty-five years of experience (ab)using substances. Please join this folksy degenerate for an evening of thematic storytelling where he'll share some of his most amusing, drug-fueled lowlights with you.*

Through his participation in YALL, Murf met and received grant funding from the Open Society Foundations to produce and launch *Murf Meyer is Self-Medicating*, a multiplatform podcast and video series focused on addiction, recovery, and harm reduction. **Self-Medicating is currently developing its second season.**

## JOEY CLIFT *GOING NATIVE (YALL 2019)*

**Logline:** *Going Native is a series of comedic, animated PSAs that shine a satirical light on some of the weird microaggressions people make toward Native Americans. Think of it as a non-musical Schoolhouse Rock! meets Key & Peele, with a Native twist.*

From his YALL experience, Joey developed a partnership with IllumiNative, the Native rights advocacy organization, and **created the first-ever Indigenous Comedians List**. He also met and worked with Comedy Central to write, direct and star in a comedy short about Native sports mascots. *Going Native* will begin production on new PSAs in 2022 with grant support from a YALL partner.



## CAROLYN PIERRE-OUTLAR *RHONDA MITCHELL, M.D. (YALL 2020)*

**Logline:** *The life of an ambitious, Type-A doctor gets turned upside down when she gets fired from her dream job and returns home to work in her father's Harlem-based clinic. She soon learns that unconventional tactics are the only way to manage this irreverent group of patients. Things quickly go from bad to worse when her father retires and her ex-boyfriend creeps back in the picture.*

Through her YALL experience, Carolyn met Roy Wood Jr. (*The Daily Show*) and teamed up to pitch and produce the show. In 2021, **NBC Universal purchased the show** and announced it is in development for the network.



## LORENA RUSSI *HILO* (YALL 2020)

**Logline:** *HILO* is a high-concept, action-packed dramedy series. After being kicked out of home, a Queer Latinx, Hilo, outcast joins an underground soccer league, catapulting herself into dirty money, lust, and violent rivalries.

Through her participation in YALL, Lorena attracted a production company partner to produce and pitch her project (Wise Entertainment) with **a first-look deal at Amazon Studios, attached a showrunner, and landed talent representation.**



## THADDEUS MCCANTS *LIT LOUNGE* (YALL 2020)

**Logline:** A 30-Min single camera workplace comedy about marijuana's journey from disproportionately policed Schedule-I street drug to White corporate wonder crop. Marijuana just became legal and Reggie Evans was just released from jail for selling while it wasn't; seeing no POC in the marijuana industry, Reggie decides to use his illegal knowledge to build a legal dispensary: the *LIT LOUNGE*. AKA Weed: F.U.B.U.

Following his YALL experience, Thaddeus successfully **sold his show idea to Black Entertainment Television (BET),** which awarded him with a development deal for *Lit Lounge*.

## ABDALLAH NABIL, AYMAN SAMMAN, & YUSEF ZEIDAN *MOMO'S AMERIKA* (YALL 2021)

**Logline:** A jovial immigrant with a short attention span works various odd jobs to support his family while chasing the American dream as he creates his own version of America.

Coming out of their YALL pitch, Abdallah, Ayman and Yusef landed a **distribution deal with Comedy Central,** which released the first episodes of *Momo's Amerika* in late 2021.



## KALI RAQUEL *PUBLIC SCHOOL* (YALL 2021)

**Logline:** Benjamin Blackmon, a culturally out-of-touch, former corporate financier turned inexperienced principal gets a rude awakening when he learns he has been assigned to P.S. 13, the DMV of public schools located in the worst neighborhood in the city.

Kali attracted the attention of powerhouse talent managers with her YALL pitch and is now **represented by Haven Entertainment** for *Public School* and other projects.



## CHRISTOPHER DE LA CRUZ

### GETTING SCHOOLED WITH CHRIS DE LA CRUZ (YALL 2021)

**Logline:** *Getting Schooled*, hosted by high school teacher / comedian Chris De La Cruz, is a news satire talk show that focuses on the inequities of American education and lets Gen Z audiences know that it isn't them, but their schools that are failing. In Mr. DLC's class, an array of comedic monologues, sketches, out-of-studio "Field Trips," and interviews with celebrity guests and youth activists will not only entertain, but also provide young people the tools to take action and fix a broken education system. *Getting Schooled* is a new kind of late-night show: one that empowers you to go out and make a difference... only after making fun of your teacher's favorite tote bag.

Based on his YALL pitch, Chris was approached by **Issa Rae's talent management company, Color Creative**, where he is now represented for this project and others to follow.

## SHERI BRADFORD CAMERONTOWN (YALL 2021)

**Logline:** *After living (and metaphorically dying) in LA for over a decade, Shannon Cameron, a millennial Black woman, returns to her conservative South Carolina hometown to start a cannabis farm on her family's historical land.*

From her YALL pitch and subsequent meetings, Sheri garnered **new representation with a manager at 3Arts Entertainment and an agent at Gersh**. She was also chosen as a 2022 Culture and Narrative Fellow with the Opportunity Agenda, a prominent social justice organization.



## AIR DURNELL AND MADDIE SMITH CAMP (YALL 2021)

**Logline:** *Camp* is a 30-minute comedic television series about married lesbian couple, Leo and Jo Powers, who re-open their inherited gay "conversion" camp as a secret queer utopia for children who were originally sent to pray the gay away.

Based on their pitch at 2021's YALL showcase, Air and Maddie attached an executive producer to *Camp* and **garnered representation from management company 3Arts**, which will help them to pitch and develop *Camp* and other comedy projects.

# TESTIMONIALS

## WHAT PHILANTHROPISTS, ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY EXECUTIVES, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERS SAY

In terms of the work that the *Yes And... Laughter Lab* does, and what's so special about it, is that it nurtures the gifts of promising comics – their wit, their intelligence, their innate sense of timing – and they do so so that [the comedians] can become disruptors. The combination of reason, of railing socially and politically to really open our eyes to the most pressing topical issues of the day, is something that YALL realized the value of. **They are early pioneers of taking this art form and applying it for social good.**

**ZEYBA RAHMAN**  
**DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION**

**This is a first-of-its-kind model.** It's the luck of my life that I got to know about [the Lab] early and help make it happen in a way that is like producing really great and world-changing idea, heart and mind changing, hilarious projects that I hope that we can keep doing more of at Comedy Central and across all of the media brands.

**ERIKA SOTO LAMB**  
**PARAMOUNT/COMEDY CENTRAL**

Over the past few years, we have seen in the data that GLAAD puts together for our annual *Where We Are on TV* Reports that the majority of the trans characters that exist in television are in heavy dramas and the result and cultural consequence of that is that [transgender people] have not yet reached our *Ellen* or *Will & Grace* or *Modern Family* moment [in comedy]. Trans characters, trans people have for a hundred years been the butt of the joke, the punch line and there's not been, yet, a full opportunity to laugh with trans people, and not at us... That's why **I am so invested in this work that [the Laughter Lab does] in providing mentorship connections to emerging comedians. Comedy can be used as a genre in ways that so many other genres and stories can't [to] effectively change hearts and minds.**

**ALEX SCHMIDER**  
**GLAAD**

# TESTIMONIALS

## WHAT COMEDIANS SAY

I wanted to talk about Black women in medicine, and how underrepresented we are in media. **YALL has literally changed my life.**

**CAROLYN PIERRE-OUTLAR**  
**YALL 2020**

I'm a much stronger pitcher/presenter thanks to the rote practice of pitching my project so many times. It's evolved a lot since my Laughter Lab pitch, but **the lab taught me to continue developing and not stop** just because you get a 'no.'

**MARIE CHENG**  
**YALL 2020**

I grew up not believing I could work in comedy because I never saw any Native American comedians on TV... To go from that to having my face on Comedy Central for a project that I'm working on is insane to me. That just would not have happened without the *Yes, And... Laughter Lab*. [The impact of YALL] isn't stopping at the comedians that win YALL... it's also leading to opportunities for people that are in our circle who are marginalized comedians. So the effects of it are impossible to measure but it's immense... As marginalized creators, so much of the struggle we're fighting is getting our foot in the door, meeting people and getting into these pipelines for getting our work developed and getting these great opportunities. **And for me, the *Yes, And... Laughter Lab* took me from being basically a Los Angeles alt comedy guy... to introducing me to so many great people in the industry...** and other people that have done such great work in helping me push my comedy forward.

JOEY CLIFT  
YALL 2019

This was the first program I participated in with the social justice component, and Yes And was so valuable to me because it helped me flesh out all of the social justice aspects of my story that I hadn't quite seen. It also connected me to other great social justice orgs (shout out to the Opportunity Agenda!) which has given me even more resources and help. **The Laughter Lab has literally been the fire I needed to get my story off the ground.** It helped me get a manager and an agent, set up studio meetings, and helped me get my story to a great place.

SHERI BRADFORD  
YALL 2021

We wanted to show the real immigrant experience and how immigrants are influenced by America and, also, they end up influencing America in so many ways. This has been a surreal experience. **Aside from what this is going to do to my career... [the Lab] ignited in me a sense of service.**

AYMAN SAMMAN  
YALL 2021

**I got hired on a new scripted TV dramedy, in part because of my knowledge of how to merge comedy + healthcare advocacy.** I was also hired to write/produce a new documentary short about Black maternal health by one of the producers who saw our pitch at YALL.

SASHA STEWART  
YALL 2020

I went from not even knowing how to operate in a general [entertainment industry meeting], to developing two shows... I got a production company through this Lab. On top of that, I got a showrunner... As a result of the Lab, I also got representation. **This group has fully changed my life...** This [team] is the most authentic group of people.

LORENA RUSSI  
YALL 2020

**The *Yes and...Laughter Lab* is a confidence boost in all senses.** The moment you are preselected as a finalist you are given a winner treatment and the program focuses on helping you identify your strengths and the potential of your project instead of its flaws and your areas of improvement. I mean of course YALL helps with that too but it is the culture of the organization that is completely different from anything I've experienced in the past. The team is emotionally invested in you and your success.

JULIETA MESSMER  
YALL 2021

# THE YALL NETWORK

Since 2019, YALL has expanded its institutional partners to include more than 40 organizations and companies across the entertainment industry and social justice. Through this network, diverse comedians are creating and accessing new opportunities for their current and future work that challenges the status quo and breaks new ground.



## PAST & PRESENT FUNDERS/SPONSORS

