

Hire Survivors Hollywood® Toolkit

Development

Supporting Survivors In The Development Phase

Survivors and Silence Breakers deserve to be empowered to share their stories - whether they're survivor-related or not - and be hired to develop their work. Regardless of past credits - and especially since many survivors and Silence Breakers have faced career retaliation - filmmakers should meet with self-identified survivors for general meetings and pitches. Hire Survivors Hollywood can help you prioritize writers who are survivors when choosing material to develop, and if a story being told pertains to survivor issues, we can connect you to survivors as consultants!

“No projects should profit off of survivor's stories without survivor involvement, especially while so many survivors have been retaliated against for coming forward.”

Sarah Ann Masse - Actor, Writer, Filmmaker, Founder of Hire Survivors Hollywood

**DEAR HOLLYWOOD,
NO STORIES
ABOUT SURVIVORS
WITHOUT
SURVIVORS**

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Here are some quantifiable steps you can take to ensure you're supporting survivors in the development phase. Hire Survivors Hollywood can assist with these steps, or connect you to the people and resources you might need to complete them!

Accepting Unsolicited Material Part 1

- **Actively seek out and accept queries, loglines, materials, and more from self-identified survivors. Hire Survivors Hollywood can help you design and implement all of the following suggestions:**
- **It is essential to make it known that your project, company, production, etc. is committed to hiring survivors and creating a safe and equitable work environment for all.**
- **Create a “submissions” section of your website in which submission guidelines are clearly laid out. For example: a release that must be completed and signed that will be sent along with the script.**
- **On this submissions page, indicate that the stakeholder is actively seeking materials from historically marginalized groups including (but not limited to) BIPOC; LGBTQ+; Disabled People; Survivors of Sexual, Physical, and Emotional Abuse; and Silence Breakers.**
- **At no point is it appropriate to require any self identifying survivor to disclose the details or nature of their abuse, including (but not limited to) details about who abused them, when, or how. It is essential that everyone involved is trauma informed, and respectful at every point in the hiring process.**

95% of entertainment workers said resources (e.g. helpline, website, etc.) would be most valuable to prevent harassment.

The Hollywood Commission Survey

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Accepting Unsolicited Material Part 2

- Create a press release to alert trades announcing the stakeholder's partnership with Hire Survivors Hollywood and their commitment to providing opportunities to survivors and Silence Breakers.
- Send out a similar notice to all appropriate professionals such as agents, managers, casting directors, unions, and more, to encourage them to submit their clients - and inform their members - of your new efforts.
- Professional representatives (agents, managers, etc.) should also be encouraged to send information about Hire Survivors Hollywood's Survivor Talent Database to their entire roster so they have the opportunity to self identify and be submitted for all our partner projects.

“I truly believe the work Hire Survivors Hollywood is doing is not only a way to combat blacklisting, but one of the only ways to create a safer industry overall. The more we create trauma informed spaces in the entertainment industry and promote the people who deserve it, the less spaces will exist that not only allow but welcome predators like Eric Weinberg.”

Claire Wilson, survivor and photographer

65% of entertainment workers believe an online space for survivors of sexual violence working in entertainment - to facilitate creative collaboration - would be useful.

The Hollywood Commission Survey

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Evaluating Material

- Put an emphasis on choosing material submitted by survivors. Hire Survivors Hollywood can help you design and implement all of the following suggestions:
- Make sure your readers, department heads, or other folks with hiring power evaluate material based on the quality of the idea, writing, and potential, and not solely on past successes, credits, or name recognition (this is particularly important because so many survivors and Silence Breakers have faced retaliation and other career delays or lack of opportunities that make it more difficult for them to have already acquired “impressive” credits).
- Make sure you have folks who are trauma informed and familiar with issues surrounding survivors and survivor stories evaluating the materials. It is essential that stories - whether they are specifically about abuse or not - begin to be told through the lens of those who have not had as many opportunities to have their stories told, allowing for stories to move away from damaging stereotypes and tropes.
- While it is important to make “issues” films and shows about subjects such as abuse, it is also important to hire survivors and Silence Breakers to create all sorts of stories. Their unique perspective on the world will translate to all genres/subject matter and will lead to fewer harmful stereotypes and tropes across all media. If a self identified survivor submits an action comedy script, give it as much honest consideration as you would if they submitted a drama about domestic violence. To borrow a rallying cry from our disabled siblings, there should be no stories about us, without us. But survivors should not be limited to **only** creating stories about abuse.
- At no point is it appropriate to require any self identifying survivor to disclose the details or nature of their abuse, including (but not limited to) details about who abused them, when, or how. It is essential that everyone involved is trauma informed and respectful at every point in the hiring process.
- Put out a press release indicating your partnership with Hire Survivors Hollywood with a call to action encouraging survivors and Silence Breakers to actively submit to your company and projects.
- Send out a similar notice to all appropriate professionals such as agents, managers, casting directors, and unions to encourage them to submit their clients - and inform their members - of the your new efforts.
- Professional representatives (agents, managers, etc.) should also be encouraged to send information about Hire Survivors Hollywood’s Survivor Talent Database to their entire roster so they have the opportunity to self identify and be submitted for all our partner projects.

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Developing Material

- Hire writers and consultants on stories specifically pertaining to survivor issues/survivor stories and hire survivors for all manner of projects. Hire Survivors Hollywood can help you design and implement all of the following suggestions for implementation:
- If you're telling a story that involves sexual, emotional, or physical violence, rape culture, misogyny, victim blaming, and other issues pertaining to the survivor community, ensure that the story is being told by those who have actual experience as a survivor or Silence Breaker. If a script that has already been optioned or purchased was written by someone who doesn't self-identify as a survivor, hire an additional writer who is a survivor to collaborate or re-write; or at bare minimum hire consultants from the survivor community and pay them a fair wage and credit them properly to do a sensitivity read, notes session, etc.
- Regardless of the subject matter of the project, when stakeholders are giving notes, do so from a trauma informed perspective and do not encourage the inclusion of harmful stereotypes or tropes. This is another area where co-writers, consultants, and/or sensitivity readers from the survivors community are essential.
- Hire survivors and Silence Breakers for projects that are not solely "survivor stories" and include them at all stages of development.
- Regardless of who wrote the project - or the subject matter of a project - hire survivors as consultants and sensitivity readers.
- At no point is it appropriate to require any self identifying survivor to disclose the details or nature of their abuse, including (but not limited to) details about who abused them, when, or how. It is essential that everyone involved is trauma informed, and respectful at every point in the hiring process.

"Our film has changed a lot since its conception and has become a braver and braver story. We decided if we're going to put our personal resources and give our all to make a movie, it might as well be the boldest version of what we want to say. And if our script is going to tackle conflicting material, we want actors on board who are ready to use their voices for the greater good. We believe aligning with survivors surrounds us with people who are not only talented but have a depth and strength of character. It's about us opening doors, sure, but it's us who are ultimately blessed. At the end of the day, everything, and I mean everything, is about the people with whom you surround yourself, and the "WHY" of it all."

Blaize Hall - Actor, Writer, Director

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General Meetings and Pitches

- Meet with self-identified survivors, regardless of their past credits or cachet. Hire Survivors Hollywood can help you design and implement all of the following suggestions for implementation:
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- Send out a similar notice to all appropriate professionals such as agents, managers, casting directors, and unions to encourage them to submit their clients - and inform their members - of your new efforts.
- Professional representatives (agents, managers, etc.) should also be encouraged to send information about Hire Survivors Hollywood's Survivor Talent Database to their entire roster so they have the opportunity to self identify and be submitted for all our partner projects.
- Make active efforts to set up generals and/or pitch meetings with those who have submitted their materials to you via your website or other channels. For every non-survivor you set up a meeting with, set up a meeting with a survivor.
- At no point is it appropriate to require any self identifying survivor to disclose the details or nature of their abuse, including (but not limited to) details about who abused them, when, or how. It is essential that everyone involved is trauma informed, and respectful at every point in the hiring process.

75% of employees who spoke out against workplace mistreatment faced some form of retaliation.

The Hollywood Commission Survey

"I dedicate this story to every single survivor of sexual assault."

Michaela Coel in her acceptance speech after she became the first Black woman to win the Emmy award for Outstanding Writing for a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie for her HBO drama, "I May Destroy You," which she wrote, directed, and starred in. The series is inspired by Coel's experience of being a survivor of sexual assault.