



CHICAGO STATE
UNIVERSITY

Communications, Media Arts & Theatre

NEWSLETTER [csu.edu/CMAT](https://www.csu.edu/CMAT)

BLACK MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

REPORTED BY DEANDRE WILLIAMS

The Department of Communications, Media Arts and Theatre (CMAT) at CSU held its first **Black Media and Entertainment Industry Conference** (BMEIC) between April 27 to 30th, 2021. According to **Dr. Christine List, Chairperson of CMAT**, there were more than 380 registered participants.

“The BMEIC celebrated the deep connections our academic program has built within the media industry in Chicago. Being a virtual conference meant attendees from all over the city and the country



Louis Carr, President of Media Sales for BET Networks

were able to join us,” said Dr. List.

Over this four day period, the conference hosted numerous panels covering important issues in the industries of radio, public relations, advertising, theatre, film, and television. On Tuesday, April 27, **Chicago State University President Z. Scott** opened the event. President Scott was followed by a keynote conversation with **Louis Carr, President of Media Sales for BET Networks**. In the afternoon, industry leaders, **Melody Spann Cooper, Chairman of Midway Broadcasting Cooperation**, and **Michelle Flowers Welch, Chairman and CEO of Flowers Communications Group**, spoke with CMAT faculty about the trailblazing leadership roles they have undertaken in their respective industries.

Fifteen panels were held during the four-day conference. Panelists included **Keith Walker**, Cinematographer on **John Lewis: Good Trouble** and **Maya Angelou: And Here I Rise**, and **Daniel Willis** whose credits include directing for **Grey’s Anatomy**. Hollywood Screenwriters **Sara Finney Johnson**, Executive Producer of **Moesha, The Parkers**, and **Alisha Cowan**, writer on **South Side**,



spoke about the need to perfect your craft. CMAT alumnus, **Rodney “HotRod” Washington** gave us the inside story of his rise from WCSURadio to landing at **Power92** as an on-air personality in the nation’s top 3 market.

The conference allowed students to engage with black people who are actively working in the industry and to hear their stories. Most importantly, students were able to see the networking opportunities that Chicago State University offers current and prospective students to help them achieve success in their professional careers.

According to one of the CSU students who attended the conference **Rashna Green**, “I attended the panel that featured Michelle Flowers Welch. She gave plenty of great advice on how she got her start. What I was able to take away from the discussion was to be sure that your profession meets your passion, and you will never regret your occupation.”

CMAT COLLABORATES WITH LEO BURNETT AND THE MGP ADVERTISING BOOTCAMP

REPORTED BY RASHNA GREEN

The Department of Communications, Media Arts & Theatre is collaborating with Leo Burnett, a world-class Chicago-based advertising company, and the **Marcus Graham Project (MGP)**. The project offers creative and diverse participants the opportunity to learn skills and gain real-life experience in the media and marketing industry through participation in a ten-week bootcamp followed up by paid internships

within the Leo Burnett family of companies.

CMAT seniors **Malcolm Conyers, Ryonn Gloster, Jameelah Hargrove, and Archie Shaw** are currently participating in **Chi inColor**, a project for which they design advertisements for CSU.

"I am so grateful to have been given this opportunity. It has been a monumental experience for me. These skills are priceless," said Malcolm Conyers.



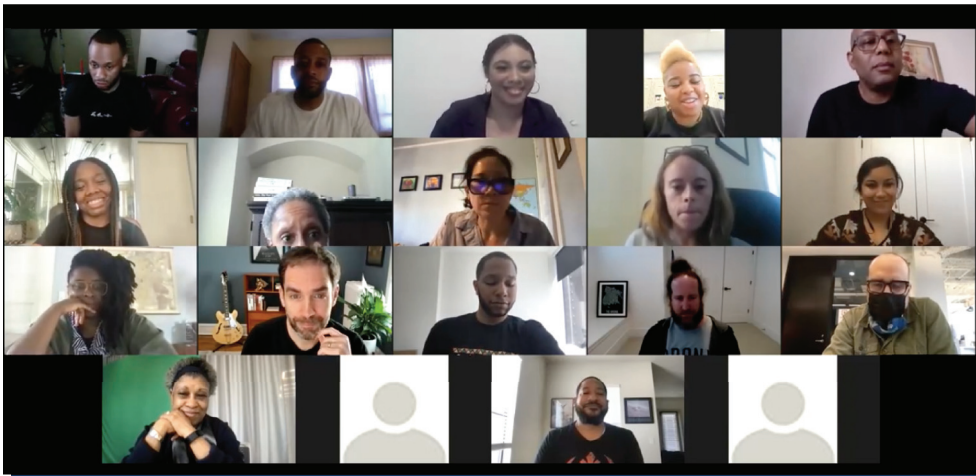
The Chi in Color project for the MGP Advertising workshop

The specific skills they have learned through this bootcamp include: building agency websites, investigating customer insight, learning how to reach target audiences,

"We believe that the South Side is a creative hub waiting to be explored. Our goal with this program is to promote creativity as a career option for the talented students at CSU," said Ramon Davis, the senior account supervisor for the project.

Mr. Davis is also an alumnus of the MGP Bootcamp. His training through the program has afforded him a plethora of experience in marketing and advertising. He encourages diversity within this field and for the participants to achieve their goals in a realistic, creative learning environment. Dedicated to increasing skilled minorities, this Bootcamp provides a real-world modern experience

including brand marketing, advertising, and PR production. "Stay memorable, and you shall soar," said Mr. Davis.



MGP Bootcamp Zoom workshop

analyzing audiences' demographics, marketing on social media, and software knowledge.

“WHOLE” WINS FILM FESTIVAL AWARD!



Spring 2021 has been an exciting time for the students in the Fall 2019 CMAT Cinema Practicum. They found out their class project, a dystopian thriller called **Whole**, will have its in-person premiere at the **Chicagoland Shorts Film Festival** this summer. **Whole** was also accepted into four international film festivals including London’s **Rapport Festival**, the **Out of Africa Film Festival** in Nairobi, Kenya, the **Kwanzaa Film Festival** in Harlem, New York, and the **Collected Voices Film Festival** in Chicago.

The Collected Voices International Film Festival,

which was held via the **It’s a Short** festival platform, announced in November that **Whole** had won the prize for **Best Student Narrative Film**.

Whole is the story of a group of young women who are sent to a “Completion Camp” where they learn the horrifying reality of what happens when women are oppressed in the name of honor culture. **Ryonn Gloster**, the screenwriter for **Whole**, came up with the idea for this allegorical film with a social justice message after visiting Kenya and meeting girls who had been subjected to the practice of female genital mutilation.

According to **Dr. Christine List**, the instructor for the CMAT Cinema Practicum, “The movie was made possible through hundreds of hours of creative collaboration between CMAT students. It’s a tribute to them that so many film festivals want to screen their movie.”

CMAT majors **Ericka Henderson**, **Ryonn Gloster** and **Evelio Zavala** directed **Whole** while **Jazman Cooper** served as Director of Photography and **Brandon Parks** led the lighting department. **Keyshawn Fields** was responsible for location sound mixing.

Julian Williams was the editor and **David Cross** was the assistant editor.

Whole featured CMAT major **LaNelle Lewis** in the lead role along with an ensemble cast that included **Amanda Wilkerson**, **Cristal Boisseau**, **Ryonn Gloster**, **Marlon Tatum**, **Kimiante Ellis**,

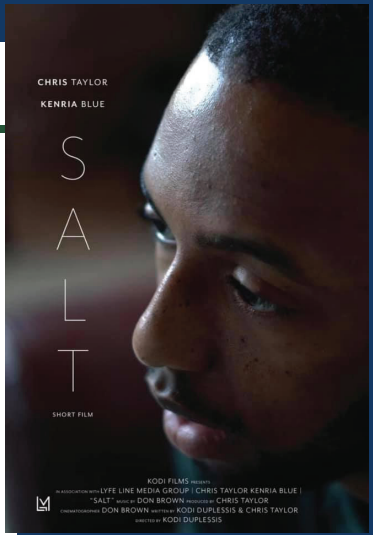
DeShae Cora, **Jameelah Hargrove**, **Andra Niles**, **Troi Tyler**, **Ziare Williams** **Warren** and **Norman Davis**.

For more information on the cast and crew and to view the trailer for the film, please visit <https://girltalkdigitalmedia.wixsite.com/whole/meet-the-cast-crew>.



Cast and crew of **Whole**

CMAT THEATRE ALUMNUS CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR



CSU Alum **Christopher Taylor**

REPORTED BY DEANDRE WILLIAMS

CMAT alumnus Christopher Taylor's latest film, **Salt**, has just been released on **YouTube**.

Salt is about a man who takes interest in a woman that he meets in a coffee shop. The man, played by Taylor, becomes emotionally attached to the woman which leads him to seek therapy.

Since graduation, Taylor has been

embraced by the city's theatre community and has performed in a number of roles including **In the Shadow of Justice** in 2017, **Down in the Dm's**, **A New Attitude: Pattie Labelle Story**, and **Defacing Michael Jackson** in 2018, **Urban Love Story**, **A Raisin in the Sun** in 2019, and **Radio Golf** in 2020. Taylor has also landed roles on television and was recently signed by a major casting agent.



“It went beyond the classroom, which is not common. I am who I am because of Chicago State,” said Taylor.

Taylor acknowledged that CMAT's passionate professors and intimate class sizes benefited his career. He believes the small classes allowed professors to focus on his strengths and weaknesses. He said that Professor Khan drilled into him constantly.

She understood how passionate he was about acting and paid close attention to him. When asked how CMAT helped advance the acting skills he says, “The professors, like Professor Khan and Dr. List, were not just teaching him but also helped him find jobs, told him of training

classes or workshops, and connected Taylor with directors and other actors.”

“It went beyond the classroom, which is not common. I am who I am because of Chicago State,” said Taylor.

He ended the interview saying he misses and loves his CSU family, without them he may have given up on this a long time ago. He feels the professors and classmates created a family vibe during his time as a student that has carried over. He loves the support he receives, and CSU is the fuel to his fire.

CHRISTINE HOUSTON, THE PEARL OF CHICAGO STATE AND TEACHING LEGEND

REPORTED BY LINDA WALKER

When CMAT lecturer Christine Houston watches the Academy Awards ceremony on television, actress **Regina King's** accomplishments stand out in the crowd.

Christine Houston created the play that became the sitcom **227** which catapulted Regina King into stardom.

As a lecturer in CMAT, Houston teaches **Screenwriting, Writing for TV, and Playwriting**. She is recognized as a playwright, having **Two Twenty-Seven** that was

adapted and became NBC's hit sitcom, **227**. She worked over five years as a staff writer on now-classic television shows like **227** and **Punky Brewster**.

Houston says this experience helps her bring expertise to her students while teaching them the universal format for scriptwriting.

She emphasizes the importance of using correct English, grammar, and punctuation when writing a script to submit to showrunners, executive producers, and other potential readers for the purpose of being able to successfully break into the entertainment industry.



Christine Houston, creator of Two Twenty-Seven, the inspiration for classic sitcom 227



The revered sitcom 227 with stars Marla Gibbs and Jackee Harry

Houston's success as a playwright and a television staff writer gave her insight into the entertainment industry that she has shared with her students. They realize that if she did it, they can do it too. As a former student, I remember she ran her classrooms like a television or playwriting seminar. She encouraged every student to tap into their creativity.

A CSU alumna, Houston left Hollywood and returned to Chicago to care for ailing family members. She decided to continue her education by obtaining a B.A. in Communications at CSU.

Soon after her graduation, she was invited to teach. That was

eleven years ago, and it has become the joy of her life.

Houston sometimes wonders what her students think about her teaching methods. She admires the teaching skills of Dr. Christine List, Chairperson of CMAT, whose class in screenwriting Houston took while she was a student at CSU. The two women became writing partners and published a book called **The Screenwriter's Guidebook: Inspiring Lessons in Film and Television Writing**.

Houston's Hollywood stories and humor bring a lightness to her classroom. She hopes the students have enjoyed her teaching as much as she has enjoyed teaching them.

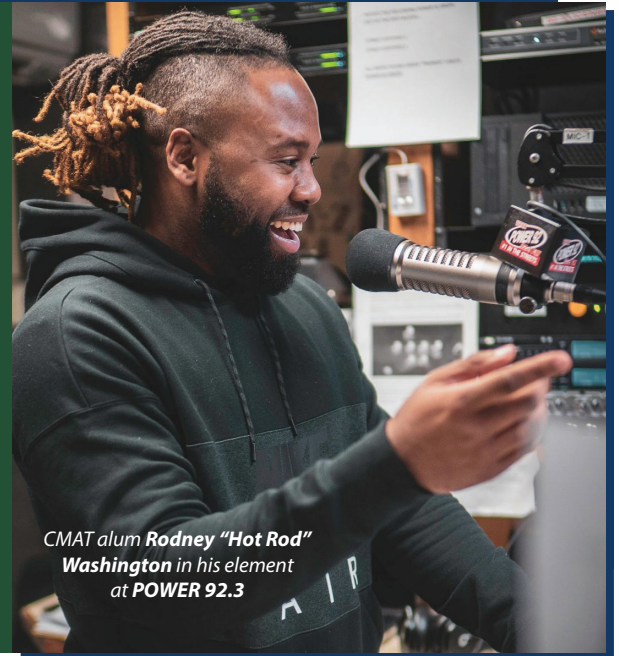
RODNEY “HOT ROD” WASHINGTON: A DIAMOND IN CMAT’S JEWEL BOX

REPORTED BY LINDA WALKER

CMAT alumnus Rodney “Hot Rod” Washington is an on-air personality for the popular Chicago radio station **POWER 92.3**. Hot Rod fills the evening airwaves with hip-hop music. His music audience spans Millennials, Generations X, and Alphas. Hot Rod will proudly admit that the road to his success at POWER 92 started at Chicago State University (CSU).

Hot Rod is a graduate of CSU and majored in Communications, Media, Arts and Television (CMAT). However, the road was not easy.

Hot Rod originally attended college in Iowa. Disappointed, he realized that great education and experience was near his home in Chicago at CSU. When he enrolled in CMAT, the staff was very hands-on.



CMAT alum **Rodney “Hot Rod” Washington** in his element at **POWER 92.3**



Troi Tyler called Hot Rod “creative, innovative and energetic.”

Professor Devin Washington (no relation) personally assisted in making sure he chose the best classes. If he needed any mentoring, the CMAT faculty and staff were there. One of the premier ladies of Chicagoland radio was also at CSU, **Troi Tyler**. She called Hot Rod “creative, innovative and energetic.” She recalled his time at WCSU and how she helped him learn not to take no for answer.

To hear Chicago State’s gem, Rodney “Hot Rod” Washington, tune in to **POWER 92.3**, **Monday** through **Friday 7-10 p.m.** and **Saturday 6-10 p.m.**