



Recap Spotlight Series with Wendy Calhoun Sunday, March 6, 2016

If you were unable to attend our Wendy Calhoun Spotlight event earlier this year, here's some quick notes on the words of wisdom and inspiration we gleaned from Wendy.

Her career – started her career working with Tim Burton and Mark Burnett. Was Development Executive afterwards. While she was at Village Roadshow Pictures – she then wrote on the side – moonlighting – plays, spec screenplays and got one optioned. Did *Animal Planet* show – writing, shooting and producing reality. Learned the whole production picture there. Everything about the process – editing, directing – beyond writing.

Gender Parity – If you can see it, be it. Directives can work – not quotas but goal matching ideas. Show runners can put this in place. A change in mindset has to happen and it starts at the top.

On *Empire's* success – the zeitgeist was in sync with the shows' broadcast, there was a huge, underserved audience – black America. The talent of Lee Daniels, the casting and Fox needed a hit so Lee Daniels and team was left alone to make a hit.

Political correctness – worry about writing political correctness sucks the drama out of a story. She loves to read - Elmore Leonard is a favorite author. Wendy loves to write about "the longing".

How WE can affect change – We have to be mindful that there IS enough room for more than one woman, or person of color... on any project. Why do we buy into that? We have to mentor the young women and women of color who are coming along – not see them as a threat.

When asked how WIFD can affect change on a global level – she recommended we bring women onto sets to shadow as a director, or into the production office, edit bay or writers room to see how the work is done.

How do you write female characters – "Imagine it's your mother – what would she do?" She tries not to describe women characters by their physicality – rather by character – who they are and what's driving them to want what they want.

ABOUT WENDY

Wendy Calhoun is a prime time drama writer/ producer and narrative consultant. Her credits include co-executive producing and writing for Fox's new hit series **EMPIRE**, awarded 2015 Program of the Year by the Television Critics Association. In addition, she's written and produced for ABC's **NASHVILLE** and **REVENGE**, FX's **JUSTIFIED**, and NBC's **LIFE**. Calhoun served as the Narrative Consultant for Electronic Arts' **BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE** video game. She has written, produced, and/or directed over 40 hours of non-fiction programs for PBS, Animal Planet, VH1, TLC, The Travel Channel, The Discovery Channel, and FBC with credits including Discovery's **MONSTER HOUSE** and Fox's **HELL'S KITCHEN**.

Calhoun received a 2010 Peabody Award and WGA Best New Series Nomination for **JUSTIFIED**, which was named as one of the WGA's Best 100 Written Series. She received her second WGA Best New Series Nomination in 2012 for **NASHVILLE**.

Born and raised in Dallas, Texas, Calhoun studied film and television at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts as one of the university's first Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholars.

She actively participates with diversity and gender equality in entertainment initiatives including the Writer's Guild Committee of Black Writers, Google's Computer Science for Diversity in Media events, and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media.