

# Advisory Committee

Met during Media Days of our Media Studies Department.

Multiple sessions were held from **Monday, April 19 through Thursday, April 22, 2021**

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The following topics were addressed throughout the sessions:

- Academic and career backgrounds that led to their current careers.
  - Skills and education necessary for success in their work, including writing, directing, producing, acting, cinematography/videography, and stunt work.
  - Collaboration with other artists in their work.
  - How to resolve problems that occur during the preproduction through postproduction phases of filmmaking.
  - Resources of a variety of production situations.
  - Opportunities in the industries.
  - Advice on how to succeed in the industry.
  - The current state of the industry, including changes brought on by the Coronavirus pandemic.
  - Ways to improve diversity in the film and television industries.
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## Participants

**Monday, April 19, 2021**

**2:30 – 3:40 pm**

**Robert Broadhurst:** writer, director, editor

Editor for Emmy-nominated television, documentary film, and commercials.

*An Occurrence at Arverne*

**Charles Hayes IV:** producer

*An Occurrence at Arverne*

*Fish*

*Clockwork*

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**Tuesday, April 20, 2021**

**11:15 – 12:30 pm**

**Jayson Crothers:** cinematographer (Director of Photography)

*Axis Sally*

*Chicago Fire*

*The Thing About Harry*

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**Wednesday, April 21, 2021**

**11:15 – 12:35 pm**

**Kelly Richardson:** stunt woman, actress

*Beautiful Boy*

*Bones*

*Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol. 2*

*Westworld*

**Hiram A. Murray:** actor

*General Hospital*

*The Great War*

**11:35 – 12:45 pm**

**Serena Reid:** combat photographer, White House videographer, Adjunct Professor (TV News, Sports Production and Direction)

KUSI

Palomar College

**Aida Soria:** segment producer

*Fox News*

*KUSI*

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**Thursday, April 22, 2021**

**6:30 – 7:30 pm**

**Levi Grear:** producer, writer, director, AD, combat videographer

*The AfterMath*

*Campfire*

*City of Fallen Angels*

*Gander*

**Sacha Smith:** director, writer, producer

*A Little Fellow*

Commercials

Music Videos

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Highlights below from sessions. Transcripts available upon request.

## **Academic and career experience that gained skills and led to current success in the industry**

**Charles Hayes IV:** producer

Experience working in college on a short film. Led to interest in pursuing a career.

Furthered skills in a TV production company in Atlanta. Moved to New York for job opportunities.

Participated in internships, sometime free. First extry work as PA (production assistant)

Further experience gained by being a Production Secretary, Production Coordinator, Production manager.

Learned producer skills from these various jobs as well as still learning today in current work.

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### **Robert Broadhurst**

Attended film school.

Worked for a photographer. recruiting for film shoots.

Early PA work for free in NYC, to make connections and skills in areas of production (PA) and art direction.

For the first years, focused on editing, which was “a really great way to build my storytelling craft and sensibilities and just increase my sort of visual acuity”.

From that work and improvement on it, opportunities arose working with Kanya West and commercials for brands including Adidas, Apple, Nike, Balmain, DKNY, H&M, Alexander Wang and Equinox.

Commercial work was successful, to pay the bills and address the debt from film school.

Moved into narrative work to create something that matters and contributes to the “cultural conversation”. And to begin directing his own work.

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### **Jayson Crothers**

Academic career:

Scottsdale Community College

Columbia College: BA

American Film Institute: Masters

After his academic career, he had been doing low budget features. He notes how one project leads to another, and another until you recognize, “I’ve actually built a career”.

Big break in joining the network series, *Chicago Fire*, being in the union, working in television, with “bigger productions and higher profiles”.

He worked on a smaller feature, *Cold Water*, that “got a lot of attention and opened a lot of other doors for me”.

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### **Hiram A. Murray**

Acting since he was 17.

Doing commercials and background work on music videos.

Went to film school in NY along with formal training at Meisner Conservatory.

Actor in WWII story in *The Great War*, based on “the buffalo soldiers and it’s an all African-American fighting force that was in the army and they fought further into enemy lines”.

- Plays Private John Cain. A part that had similarities to his own life, i.e., his military background and “In the film me being the only black soldier and trying to get back to my unit, it was it was reminiscent of my own real life military experience.”

His military and police force experience enhanced his acting career as a technical advisor on tv shows and films.

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## **Kelly Richardson**

Experience: athletics: rowing in high school, on wrestling team, triathlete in college, scuba certifications that lead to being a dive master and leading dives. Joined the circus which gave her physical training.

Fulbright Grant: went to Brazil to spend a year directing a documentary film about circus performers, *Without A Net*. Successful with the film at festivals. Traveled to New York, LA, and London with it.

Networked with stunt performers while working on the film. It led to her interest in stunt work. Trained in LA for it.

Stunt schools are not common and “not really well regarded in the business”.

Useful to have Taekwondo and gymnastic classes.

Los Angeles Valley College has a stunt class that is frequented by many stunt performers.

- “Beneficial to train where other stunt performers are training and kind of develop relationships.”

Stunt performers mostly don’t have agents but get work through word-of-mouth.

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## **Skills, Resources on Set / Needed to do the job**

### **Jayson Crothers**

Notes how, in a broad sense, his job is working with the camera, that includes its movement, the angles, the lighting and other elements that contribute to the *mise en scène*. As a DP, he is in charge of the camera and lighting crews. In his most recent show in Texas, he estimates he had approximately 35 – 40 people working for him.

“Every job you end up you essentially have kind of three components, you are you're an artist you're a technician and your manager, not necessarily in that order, every project is different.”

The importance of collaboration:

- With other departments. Working with camera operators, assistants, directors, the gaffer, key grip, etc.
- Management of time, money and people.
- My responsibility in the way the day runs, e.g., 12–14 hour days on set plus 2-4 hours additional work, e.g., getting ready, reviewing footage. 4 to 6 weeks of shooting.
- The politics of dealing with people. Being open to contributing ideas.

Features are more director-driven, with a singular vision, whether the director initial the project or was hired by a studio, or both.

In TV, you have producers, a show runner and executives from both networks. The pace is fast, with at times 40-50 setups/day, meaning a new setup every 15-20 minutes.

The challenge is to be able to stay “diligent, both yourself and the people you are working with, kind of keeping everybody honest”, by being able to stop and take a few seconds/minutes to experiment and “take a moment to try to make it a little bit better and the more interesting.”

With the job, he mentions that “the thing I love about this job is that every job is different” and with every job you get to “experiment with something different” allowing for different experiences.

You are “in charge of things creatively” as well as being expected to “have a lot of technical knowledge”. He notes how having a good crew is important, as “you don't need to be an expert in everything”. He clarifies this point by noting “you do need to know enough about everything to know how to come to know how to pick the right tools and how to communicate what you need with people.”

Long hours: can be a 70-75 hour work week or more. Long hours away from home, hard on relationships, your home and social life, as well as physically and emotionally demanding.

Technology: Camera

Jayson notes that “the best thing to do is get your hands on a camera and just start shooting.” He notes how cameras continue to improve and can get “really good images”, even with less expensive cameras. He mentions the 6K Black Magic Camera for \$2500 with an \$800 lens, batteries and monitors for a complete package of \$10,000, was impressive, particularly compared with the much higher Red or Arri Alexa.

#### **Robert Broadhurst and Charles Hayes IV:** Production specifics on *An Occurrence at Arverne*

Use of Computer Graphics:

CG of plane: based on test footage and reference shot by Robert.

Experienced CG artist who studied the airspeed in the height of the plane, where it would be at that time.

The original footage happened to match his calculations perfectly.

- Importance to the story: emphasizes noise and the house being in the flight path.

Origin of story stemmed from his own experience of living in that house, forgetting to close the curtains, coming back to do so and not finding the key.

Great attention to detail of mapping out the floorplan of the house (for shooting). Improvising on shooting day, as it was a fast shoot. But necessary to have it planned out.

Importance of set design: owner of the house was a designer, a benefit, so augmented what was there. And needed to dress it for the camera. Importance of the art director.

Curtain colors to coordinate with the wardrobe.

- Robert: gave it “a little more life and vibrancy and also to help delineate each room because before the curtains were all neutral and it really just felt like he was going from one room, to the same room again to the same room again.”

Grayness of outside, and “abject space”, “where bad things could possibly happen”. Contrasts with vibrancy on inside, leading to the realization that “maybe you've misjudged the home or you misjudged the area in the same way that you may also have misjudged the character.”

Technology: Camera

Used Blackmagic Design URSA Mini Pro 4.6K G2 Digital Cinema Camera, “which shoots true 4K” (Robert). Noted its use with Cook Prime lenses.

- 4.6K images at up to 120 fps
- CMOS Sensor
- Large dynamic range at 15 stops
- Capture RAW footage in film and extended modes
- Interchangeable EF mount
- SD Memory Cards
- Connections: 12G-SDI out, HD-SDI out, balanced XLR audio with phantom power, timecode in

Robert: “I had to keep the filmmaking really neutral, because otherwise, if I'm styling it too much, if I'm using a subjective camera, if I'm using POV, is fancy shots. simple execution in pursuit of a complex result.”

Importance of **crowdfunding**, whether Indiegogo or Kickstarter.

Begin early.

- Charles: “Even if you run a campaign for 30 days it's going to take another 30 days to actually get the money in hand”. Consider this for budgeting, hiring crew, planning for a shoot, etc.

Importance of **festivals and streaming platforms**, i.e. *An Occurrence at Arverne* on Vimeo, to have your work seen. In person festivals, networking and the rise of virtual film festivals.

Charles: shooting in Atlanta, now popular for saving money, cheaper due to tax credits. Still important that industry is in LA and NY.

### **Kelly Richardson**

Notes how even if you are nervous or apprehensive of a stunt, you can't show nerves, showing that “you're not scared of anything”.

- “We're supposed to be the ones that can do the action smoothly and mimic the way that the movements of the actor if we're doubling but do it in a way that is safe.”
- We are skilled athletes with backgrounds and training in the particular stunts they are asked to perform.

### **Hiram A. Murray**

Quicker pace for TV. Have to learn a lot and may only have 3 or 4 days to shoot an episode.

Build a character throughout a whole season.

General Hospital: sometimes wasn't in an episode and sometimes 22 pages of dialogue a day.

In a feature, you have a clear beginning, middle, end. Allows for more time of a character arc. May have 3 – 4 pages of dialogue a day.

## Advice

### Robert Broadhurst

Avoid debt: “it can dictate your decisions creatively and career-wise”.

Make time to do your own work: it will tell you if you really want to do that type of work and if you are good at it.

Do all of those things and also actually produce work with people like it people like the other people charles's work with because you need to develop a body of work that you own and you also need to see how a bigger machine works yeah.

Charles:

Network

Be really open-minded and open-hearted.

Stay humble.

Work really hard.

### Jayson Crothers

Opportunities in the film industry through content needed for streaming services, i.e., Apple TV and Netflix. These are not limited to narrative, but with also with documentary and reality tv.

- Don't limit your work to one particular type or area of production, i.e. “it's only TV, it's only movies.”
- Be open to other types of production, such as commercials, music videos, and to learn from everything.
- After graduation and earlier in his career, he worked between features in corporate work, benefitting not only financially but creatively. He learned multiple camera shooting from work on corporate and training videos.

### Charles Hayes IV

If is “ok” to not know where you want to be in the film industry after graduating from film school. There are a great many different avenues, departments and facets to pursue, “especially as production is evolving.”

If unsure, PA work provides a good first step to gaining experience.

By studying the different departments that are part of producing a TV show or feature, you can see where your interests lie.

- PA work in the camera department or a PA in the lighting/grip department.

“Take it as it comes” and “be open to learning”.

“If you want to direct something, direct something. If you want to write something if you want to if you know where you want to be then start acting like you already do it now.”

Be prepared for the changes inherent in production, noting the importance of planning.

- Robert: “It is 100% guarantee that it will not go exactly as you planned for any number of reasons”.
- Life and production work, in particular, can take on a life of its own and “you've really got to respect that and listen to it and sort of let it guide you.” (Robert)
- Charles: had to work around plumbing issues on set that led to time lost while waiting for plumber, shuttling crew to other facilities.

## **Hiram A. Murray**

Learn your craft.

Need formal training.

- If you say you can do something and don't deliver, you may always be remembered for it and may not get the next job. "That's where your training come into" play.

Use your life experience to help with your career.

- Was able to be a technical advisor from his work on the police force and in the military.

Be yourself and live life. Your uniqueness is what can make you stand out from others.

- "Don't make the pursuit of this dream, be the end all be all for you."
- Your life experiences make up who you are, it's the thing that's going to separate you from everyone else, and when a producer or casting director wants to hire you for a role, it's not it's not so much, you know, whether you can hit the mark it's what uniqueness you bring to that character."

Recognize the obligation of his job as an actor:

- While he does some stunt work, depending on the type, he considers the dangers of how it can influence whether or not he can work. That possibility can shut down production which affects others' lives. By acknowledging this, he recognizes the contribution of the other artists (stunt person), leaving that side "to the professionals".

When on set, to be polite and respectful.

- Hired for your skill but also if you get along with the team on the set. Long days, often 12 hours and/or on location for several months and need to be easy to get along with.

A challenging industry:

- Important to know you will receive a million "No's" before you get one "Yes".
- Helpful to have friends for support, who are going through the same things.

## **Importance of Networking**

Noted the importance of forming relationships and "really marketing yourself as a performer, an actor and artist in this industry", knowing "how do you brand yourself".

"There's a saying that if you have 10 casting directors in your pocket in your corner, meaning they are fans of you, your career set, because every time something comes across your desk that you even remotely remind them of, they're going to bring you in for it."

Networking events, e.g., a comic Convention (Comi-con), industry party.

"Making connections is key to your success."

## **Kelly Richardson**

Be true to yourself. Do not pretend to be someone you are not.

"Maintain some life."

They think there is a certain type that is desirable which pigeon-holes them.

"Mental struggles and depression" are common in my line of work.

It is useful to imagine what you will be doing on the set and yet recognize it may change, as directors, coordinators or directors of photography see what you are capable of and may change the scene to accentuate that.

- Specifically, in relation to stunt work, there should always be a stunt coordinator on the set. There are times this will does not happen.

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## Ways to improve diversity in the industry, to prevent discrimination.

### Robert Broadhurst

Whatever level you are at, to be in a position to help someone else see that things aren't as diverse as they should be.

Realizing that people are not necessarily racist or misogynist, etc., but that they do not recognize it and have not been made aware of it. To make them aware of it is key.

- “Now, you actually have a choice you can do something about it.”
- “It's always about bringing things in light.”

Robert Broadhurst:

He discusses how Charles came to work on the film:

“First, a good producer, obviously, but second a producer from the Community, that this film most effects, and so you know, it's a narrower pool because of inequality in this country. I met with like a lot of great people. who are all great and super qualified and wants to do it, and none of them could compare to Charles.”

### Charles Hayes IV

Charles asked: “Why does he want to make this or like, why is this important to him, because at the end of the day it wasn't it wasn't about his culture or his community?”  
support it and just hope for the best or I can walk away.”

“Robert expressed that he wanted to be that whistleblower, so to speak, or like that person to speak to his Community specifically about this, or about this issue or on this topic.”

“Our discussion felt genuine, he felt genuine and the reasons behind his creation and the reason he wrote it.”

“Someone on the flip side or, on the other side of the fence is also saying like this is wrong or this is how you're approaching, people are approaching themes and ideas. I think it just gave a different perspective that I hadn't seen from anyone before and the funniness the ending of the story for this film that you saw changed from what we what was actually written.”

Diversity in hiring crews.

Be conscious of who helped you, someone that doesn't look like you.

“Disparity comes from knowing me, not seeing something that looks like me in a job that I want to do and seeing someone or even just having someone encouraged me to go there to try, it makes the world different.”

The importance of inclusion versus exploitation and knowing the difference.

- Have an inclusive pool of people to choose from.
- Seeing more in films and TV shows, for example, with siblings that are of different races.

## Hiram A. Murray

Recognizes the stories that depict “black pain”, noting that it “seems like every film that's coming out or every TV show shows African Americans going through something bad.”

He would like to see more that reflects his community in realist ways, i.e., like “friends hanging out just being friends”. (*Friends*)

“You enter into this make-believe world for either entertainment education or enlightenment, you know I, as an actor, I hope that every single time someone sits down and watch my TV shows or my movie that you go away changed for the better, whether you learned a little bit about my culture or whatever.”

“Not every movie with an all African-American cast has to be about slavery or not every African American male is a drug dealer or abuser.”

Shows could focus on characters “that could be the lawyers that could be the doctors, I mean when you look at you look at what Marvel did with *Black Panther*, and they changed the game.”

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