



**JHRTS LA: The Hollywood Reporter & JHRTS Present:
THR's 35 Under 35 Panel**

Our annual 35 Under 35 panel is back in-person this year! Join us for a discussion with rising executives on how they are blazing their own paths and leading Hollywood into the future.

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

Merideth Bajana, Partner, Grandview



Merideth Bajana is a Partner and Literary Manager at Grandview. She has worked at Grandview since its founding. She is focused in transitioning talent from international markets and between film and television. Originally from Hartford, Connecticut, Merideth graduated in 2010 from Duke University with a degree in Public Policy. She began her industry career in the WME mailroom.



George Lavender, Head of Miniseries, Wondery

George Lavender is an Emmy award-winning journalist and the Head of Miniseries at Wondery, Amazon's premiere podcast studio and network. In less than 5 years, Lavender has built the Wondery Miniseries team into a best-in-industry unit which has produced 25 #1 miniseries according to Apple Podcast Charts. He is responsible for bringing to market some of the best-known podcasts on the Wondery platform including Dr. Death, The Shrink Next Door and WeCrashed all of which were developed into TV adaptations. His most recent projects include Fed Up, an influencer feud narrated by Casey Wilson and investigative series Who Killed Daphne?, which included a confession from the accused killer of a Maltese journalist. The series he has overseen have won Edward R. Murrow Awards, Deadline Club Awards, Gracies, Ambies, Webbys and an Aria among others.



Zahra Phillips, Director of Development, Searchlight

Zahra Phillips is currently a Director of Development at Searchlight Pictures, where she has been since 2019. In her time at the company, she has had the privilege of working with a wide variety of talented auteurs, from award-winning, established filmmakers to exciting up-and-coming voices. Zahra is passionate about creating spaces for unique stories that may not fit into the traditional studio mold, and recently oversaw THE MENU, as well as RYE LANE which just premiered at Sundance. Prior to Searchlight, Zahra was an executive at Franklin Entertainment, where she oversaw projects in film and television, and before that a Creative Executive at Broad Green Pictures where she handled the development and production of the studio's original films. Born and raised in Jamaica, Zahra has always been an ardent film lover but did not see a career in the industry until her first internship, at Double Feature Films. After college, she jumped into the industry head first with a job in the WME mailroom. She worked in talent representation for several years, first at WME and then Authentic Talent and Literary Management, before moving into development at Broad Green Pictures in 2015.



Mark R. Wright, VP Film, Higher Ground

Mark R. Wright is the Vice President of Development and Production at The Obama's Higher Ground, where he oversees a slate of scripted film projects for the company's exclusive overall deal at Netflix. In this role, he champions aspirational and entertaining stories across genres as a vehicle to unite and inspire audiences.

Mark is an Executive Producer on Higher Ground's upcoming film Rustin directed by George C. Wolfe and starring Colman Domingo. His creative focus is producing unique and genre-bending narratives with people of color at the center to increase diverse images, experiences and perspectives available to audiences. For the work he's accomplished, Mark was recently named one of 35 Rising Execs Under 35 by The Hollywood Reporter in the 2022 Next Gen issue.

Prior to joining Higher Ground, Mark worked at MACRO, where he developed and executive produced Juel Taylor's directorial debut, They Cloned Tyrone (Netflix) and Thembi Banks' Young. Wild. Free. He also worked on the Oscar-nominated Judas and the Black Messiah (Warner Bros.), Alan Yang's Tigertail (Netflix), and hit sci-fi family series Raising Dion (Netflix), among others.

Mark is originally from Cleveland, OH and earned an MFA from USC's Peter Stark Producing Program and a BS in Communication from Ohio University.

MODERATOR:



Mia Galuppo, The Hollywood Reporter

Mia Galuppo is a film writer at The Hollywood Reporter, where she covers independent and studio filmmaking. Mia's work has also appeared in GQ, Vice, and California Sunday Magazine, among other publications. Mia is a graduate of the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts.