

# THE INITIATIVE GROUP

**NAFESSA WILLIAMS – EPK**

# DEADLINE

## Nafessa Williams Joins Whitney Houston Biopic 'I Wanna Dance With Somebody'



**EXCLUSIVE:** Nafessa Williams has been tapped to play Robyn Crawford in the biopic *I Wanna Dance With Somebody*, the upcoming feature about the late musical icon Whitney Houston. Williams steps in for Moses Ingram, who recently parted ways with the role.

Also joining the cast are Clarke Peters and Tamara Tunie, who will play John and Cissy Houston. Naomi Ackie will play Whitney Houston in the musical biopic that is being directed by Kasi Lemmons. The screenplay will be penned by Anthony McCarten, and will take audiences on an emotional, energetic journey through Houston's career and music.

Crawford was Houston's longtime assistant who would later become Houston's creative director while also remaining one of her closest friends.

Alongside McCarten's Muse of Fire Productions, the film is being produced by Pat Houston on behalf of the Houston Estate; Grammy-winning music producer Clive Davis; Larry Mestel on behalf of Primary Wave Music; Denis O'Sullivan and Jeff Kalligheri for Compelling Pictures; Matt Jackson of Jackson Pictures; and Molly Smith, Trent and Thad Luckinbill for Black Label Media. Primary Wave Music is a partner of the Whitney Houston estate.

Sony and TriStar Pictures will release the film in theaters on December 23, 2022.

Houston is the most awarded female music artist of all time and is one of the bestselling recording artists of all time, selling more than 200 million records worldwide. Houston won six Grammys, 16 Billboard Music Awards, 22 American Music Awards and two Emmy Awards, among many others. Houston made her acting debut with the romantic thriller film *The Bodyguard*, which she recorded six songs for the film's soundtrack, including "I Will Always Love You." The song won the Grammy for Record of the Year and became the bestselling physical single by a woman in music history. The soundtrack album won the Grammy for Album of the Year and remains the bestselling soundtrack album in history.

In 2020, Whitney was posthumously inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and became the first black artist to have three RIAA Diamond Awards.

Williams was recently seen in the Deon Taylor feature *Black & Blue* alongside Naomie Harris, Frank Grillo and Tyrese Gibson for Screen Gems. Last year she wrapped the fourth and final season *Black Lightning*. Her other credits include *Burning Sands*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival to rave reviews, the CBS series *Code Black* and Showtime's *Twin Peaks*. Up next, she will be seen in Lee Daniels' pilot for FX *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*.

Best known for his role as Detective Lester Freamon on *The Wire*, Peters recently starred in Spike Lee's *Da 5 Bloods* and was also seen in the HBO & BBC One series *His Dark Materials*. Peters will soon be seen starring in the AMC's *La Fortuna*, opposite Stanley Tucci, as well as Showtime's *The Man Who Fell to Earth* opposite Chiwetel Ejiofor and Naomie Harris. He can currently be seen in *The Foundation* for Apple+ and in the Netflix series *The Irregulars*.

Tunie will next be seen in *A Journal for Jordan* starring Michael B. Jordan and directed by Denzel Washington. Her other credits include AMC's series *Dietland*, the BBC/Netflix political drama *Black Earth Rising*, Apple TV+'s *See*, and Netflix's November release of the live-action series *Cowboy Bebop*. She has also starred in Wolf Films/Universal Media Studio's *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*.

Williams is repped by ICM Partners and Link Entertainment. Peters is repped by Vanguard Management Group and Conway van Gelder Grant. Tunie is repped by Alta Global Media and Paradigm.

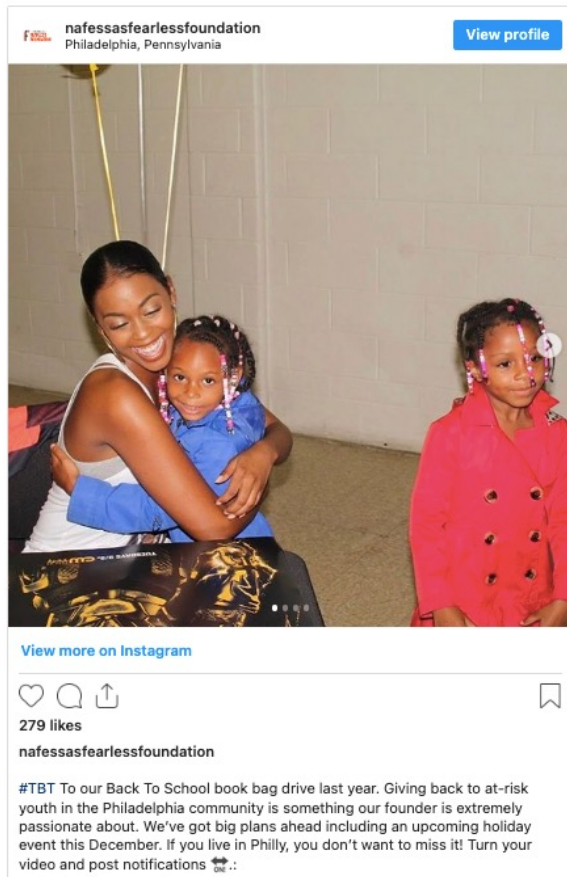
# Glitter

## Nafessa Williams Has Started a Nonprofit to Spread the Holiday Cheer This Season

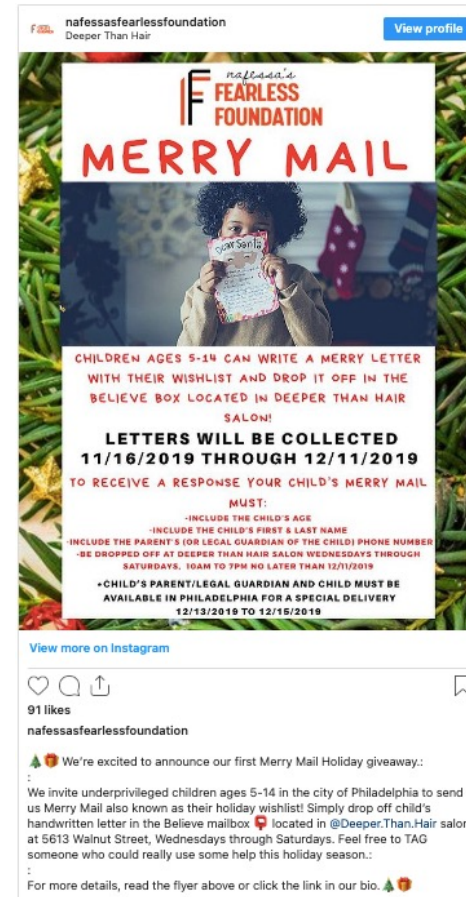


What better way to bring in the Holiday season than by donating presents to little kids?

Nafessa Williams, who plays Thunder on *Black Lightning*, has announced her non-profit, "Nafessa's Fearless Foundation. The foundation will be donating Christmas presents to children in need this holiday season.



Williams announced the non-profit via Instagram. According to the website, the foundation aims to "empower minorities to be fearless while reaching for their goals no matter their current circumstances." The foundation's first act of charity will be collecting children's wishlists. Williams detailed the rules for the program in an Instagram post. The wish list program will go on for a little under a month, and "special" deliveries will take place Dec. 12-15.



# emmy

Fans of the generous beauty can also view her stellar acting in the new police drama *Black and Blue*. It follows a rookie cop, played by Naomie Harris, who is on the run after witnessing dirty cops kill a man. Fans can also rewatch the last season of *Black Lightning*, which left fans wanting more. Thankfully, the show's heading into a fourth season.

William's act reminds us all of what's important this holiday: giving back.



**in the mix**

**NAFESSA WILLIAMS**  
"My personal style is fitness," Williams says. It's no surprise, then, that she was cast as actor daughter Alisha, a med student and part-time teacher (in a co-ed charter high school, by day) and the butt-kicking superhero Thunder by night. Off screen, Williams practices yoga regularly, which influences her look and style. "I sort of actually wear yoga pants outside of class, and I love doing my vasa and legging," she says. Here are some of her other favorites when it comes to fashion (and the prizes her show):

- **My go-to wardrobe staple:** A fur vest
- **I wish I could make it appear from my closet:** A pair of old, beat-up Doc Martens
- **A piece of jewelry:** My Koro necklace
- **Item from the show I wish I could have kept:** A pair of pumps/boots that I wore in episode three. The top part was a flower "cap" and they tied up the back.

**"Next season, I hope to wear more teacher attire. That's when I get to show off my fashion sense."**

# ESSENCE

## Nafessa Williams Advocates For Equality In New Y-FEAR Capsule



Today, athleisure apparel brand **Y-FEAR** has released its first F/W capsule titled “**EQUALITY.**” Founded by *Black Lightning* and *Black and Blue* actress **Nafessa Williams**, Y-FEAR’s latest installment was created to inspire those who strive to live a fearless life without the burden of concern for being judged, negatively viewed, or treated differently from their peers. Each shade of nude was custom-dyed to represent the various shades of melanin throughout the community, and the hoodies are able to be mixed and matched to the customer’s satisfaction.

“I’ve always loved **fashion**,” Nafessa Williams told *ESSENCE*. Founded on February 8, 2021, the Philadelphia native launched Y-FEAR (which stands for ‘Your Fears And Egos Aren’t Real!’) as a means to marry her two loves for fashion and self-care while giving back to her community in a way that demonstrates a brighter future. “I get that question, ‘if you weren’t acting, what would you be doing?’, and in today’s time we can do both, or we can do it all as long as proper planning and strategizing is involved.”

Ahead of the brand’s most recent capsule collection, *ESSENCE* caught up with Williams herself to discuss the inspiration behind the unisex lifestyle apparel brand, what equality means to her, and her journey through body confidence and body positivity as a public figure and actress.

**ESSENCE:** Tell me about the inspiration behind Y-FEAR and the significance of the name.

**Nafessa Williams:** I was inspired to create Y-FEAR first for my love of fashion especially us, my people. We love fashion, so I just wanted to connect my love for fashion and my personal wellness growth. I was like, “How do I do that?,” and Y-FEAR is the word that I came up with for myself to get me through unrealistic things like fear and my ego – those things aren’t real. I created Y-FEAR for myself. This is how I bridge fashion with mental wellness. In February of 2021, just earlier this year, I introduced it to the world and it’s been amazing. So many people are connecting to what Y-FEAR means and it stands for your fears and your ego aren’t real.

It’s a daily reminder. When people wear Y-FEAR, I want them to be reminded that whatever fears, whatever your ego is telling you that day, whatever it is you are afraid to do, it’s not real. I want us to look fly, but I also thought bridging Y-Fear with mental wellness is thinking fly as well. Incorporating the two together is how I came up with the idea. I wanted to challenge the status quo and bring awareness to the false narrative of fear. I come from Philly, which obviously is an inner-city and we’ve experienced a lot of trauma. This is my offering to those of us who have experienced trauma in inner cities.

**ESSENCE:** When it comes to athleisure, sweats, and loungewear, how does it play an essential part in your personal wardrobe?

**Williams:** Oh my God, it’s everything. For the most part when I’m going to and from set, when I am running errands, when I’m just chilling around in the house, sweat athleisure is my go-to attire, right. I was like, “Well, I keep buying everybody else’s sweats, I might as well make my own.” That was the inspiration. Getting up and going to set at 5:00 AM, I don’t want anything tight on. I’ve made Y-FEAR with comfort and quality in mind and it’s because that’s what I reach for the most is athleisure and comfortability.



**ESSENCE:** When it came down to the proper planning and strategizing, what were some of the most difficult – and the most fun parts – of launching the Y-FEAR brand?

**Williams:** The most difficult [was] the process of producing a collection, and it's a lot of sourcing and researching. A lot of it is out of your control unless you are doing cut and sew. Unless you are creating these pieces yourself with your own team, it's tough and even then, you have to rely on other people for the timeline of when the merchandise is going to be available. Shipping gets in the way [and] it's not always a quick turnaround time. [As] the solution to that challenge, I've learned that proper planning and strategizing is how you are able to stay on time with your drop dates, release dates, and those things like that.

Within the first year, I'm learning a lot. Quality control is very important and to me, it was all about quality. Y-Fear is 100% cotton made in the US, and I didn't want to put anything out if the quality was the most priority. It's not a quick turnaround as I would like it to be. The fun part is creating the designs, coming up with the name, and having it connect to me, my mental wellness, and growth. Designing is pretty fun, coming up with the collections, coming up with the colors. I like to start with an idea and it's just a beautiful experience from that start to the actual execution and having the product in hand. That whole journey is pretty fun.

**ESSENCE:** How do you use your activity and your athletic routine to practice self-care, as we transition into the season of seasonal affective disorder and the winter blues?

**Williams:** My self-care routine is very important and what that looks like for me is starting out my day. I like to start it out with prayer and meditation. I also like to do some gratitude journaling because that sets up my day. I like to journal and set my intention on the things that I want. I feel like working out is my best stress reliever. I know I'm doing my body some good. I like to think of my self-care routine as a way of me being kind to myself.

When I do all of those things at the start of my day, sometimes it doesn't happen that way, but as long as I'm doing it every day, that is taking the best care of myself and that's what it's about. Finding a routine that helps you stay balanced. We all know what it is that we need to do for ourselves. I always encourage everybody to have a routine to set those intentions, to meditate. I think that could ease some of the depression that we could be experiencing, whether it's seasonal or not.





**ESSENCE:** I also follow you on social media. You're extremely confident in your body and everything that you wear. A lot of people especially women, unfortunately, don't reach that threshold of confidence until maybe they're older or maybe they experienced that confidence when they were much younger, but they lost it. How long did it take you to truly love your body and what's the importance of loving your body and taking care of it?

**Williams:** Everybody has insecurity, but what helps me settle into those is to give love to those areas to remind myself, especially with the time that we're living in with social media, I'm not reaching for perfection anymore. I remember in my younger days it was, 'Oh, I got to have rock hard abs' and, 'Oh, I have to be this level of perfection.' I think once I got to 30, I remember being like, 'Look, this is my body, this is how I do it. This is my body. I know what my strengths or my favorite parts of my body are.' The things that aren't, I've just learned how to accentuate them. I don't have a long torso and always used to wish that I was taller. How I do things is I will try to find outfits or high waist pants that'll accentuate or elongate me and maybe do it with a belt to cinch my waist. I just don't want to fall into this idea of the perfect body that has been portrayed on social media.

I also don't want the little girls following me to feel that I'm trying to reach that as well. I know that young women are watching and that I'm an example for them. I want to make sure that I am using my influence properly and giving love to those areas of mine - that's it. I remember reading something that Tracee Ellis Ross said, that she just gave love to certain areas of her body that weren't her favorite. I really took to that and reminded myself I'm not reaching for this level of perfection. I'm good with what God gave me. It's all about accentuating what you have and finding how to dress for your body type.

I used to think that I had to be a certain size. I gained some weight and I probably gained like 10, 15 pounds - and I like it. It's my womanly body, my hip had spread to a nice level and a lot of it went to my butt. I think I was really happy about that. I've been embracing my body at the same time while making sure that I'm physically fit because that is one of the ways that I take care of my health, my wellbeing. We got to embrace our bodies. I love, love, love, love how much Megan Thee Stallion loved her body and it's natural and it's this Black womanly shape. I was being hard on myself too a little bit earlier but it's all about that transparency too. It helps other women when we are transparent about our insecurities. That's what it's about - the sisterhood.

**ESSENCE:** When it comes to Y-**FEAR**, what are some other exciting things that you're working on that you can tease us with?

**Williams:** I have a new collection that is dropping on the 19th and you are the first person I have publicly said this to. It's four shades of nude, it's so fun, and this collection is Y-**FEAR** "Equality". I was inspired to create this capsule is because every day I'm reminded of how far we still have to go. I'm very aware and I acknowledge my power as an artist. I want to make sure I use that power to foster change through fashion. When they put on a piece from this caption, I want everyone to be true to themselves and believe that they're perfect just the way that they are. This is my first collection where I've used other models. It's going to be other models of different races and just bringing us all together and showing that we're so much more alike than what society has set us up to believe.



**ESSENCE:** What are some pieces of Y-FEAR that are absolutely essential in somebody's closet right now for the winter season?

**Williams:** The essential Y-FEAR piece that everyone needs is a hoodie and I'll tell you why. Our hoodies are 14 ounces. It's perfect for the winter, depending on where you are in the world. If you have a little something under it, it might be all you need. It's perfect for travel, it's perfect for running your errands, and if you're on the airplane, it's going to keep you warm. If you had to pick one piece from the Y-FEAR collection, I would say that the hoodie is the most essential staple that you need.

Honestly, it's the whole collection because you got to be fly with the whole thing. Our sweatsuit definitely keeps you warm throughout the winter and during our coldest month throughout the year, and it's 100% cotton. The quality is amazing and everybody loves the quality - it's really thick. It definitely keeps you warm, I love to travel in it, and it's my favorite thing to wear when I'm traveling.

*While supporting Nafessa's fashion ventures and the #YFEAREquality capsule, make sure to support her as she produces and develops her very first film - 'A Holiday Chance'! Starring herself and Sharon Leal, the movie is out in theatres on November 25th. Check out the full trailer below!*



# ESSENCE

'Black Lightning' Star Nafessa Williams On Her History-Making Role and Repping Philly



Sydney Scott  
January, 16, 2018

Nafessa Williams is set to make network television history this Tuesday as The CW's *Black Lightning* makes its debut.

<https://www.essence.com/entertainment/black-lightning-nafessa-williams-interview>



China Anne McClain and Nafessa Williams Talk Black Lightning

<https://www.nbc.com/late-night-with-seth-meyers/video/china-anne-mcclain-and-nafessa-williams-talk-black-lightning/3663497>

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# teenVOGUE



## “Black Lightning” Star Nafessa Williams Talks Why Representation Matters and Bringing Thunder to Life

“It’s about being the change and stepping up and making sure that happens.”

By: Gabe Bergado  
January 23, 2018

In Nafessa Williams’s first scene on *Black Lightning*, she rolls in just like thunder: with a bang. The first time we see her character Anissa Pierce on camera, she’s being released from the police department after having been arrested at a protest against the 100, a dangerous gang that has caused trouble in the city, Freeland. Sure, she has to apologize to her father Jefferson about getting into trouble right before a big school fundraiser being held in his honor, but she’s *not* sorry about sticking up for what she believes in.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/black-lightning-nafessa-williams-anissa-pierce>



## ‘Black Lightning’ Star Nafessa Williams Explains Why It’s So Important To See Black Women’s Natural Hair On TV

By Alexis Reliford  
January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018



Amid a sea of comic-book inspired shows airing on television today, *The CW’s newest series Black Lightning* (executive producer: Sarah Schechter) is already making waves. The show follows Jefferson Pierce, a high-school principal and retired superhero, who’s lured out of retirement when crime plagues his community. And fighting crime by his side are his two daughters Anissa and Jennifer, who tap into superhero powers of their own.

<https://www.bustle.com/p/black-lightning-star-nafessa-williams-explains-why-its-so-important-to-see-black-womens-natural-hair-on-tv-7867353>

# imagista

January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020



## NAFESSA WILLIAMS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SERGIO KURHAJEC  
STYLING BY CATHERINE CRATE  
HAIR BY PAUL WARREN  
MAKE-UP BY ANNELIESE TIECK  
INTERVIEW BY KATINA GOULAKOS

"To be a woman is to be an abolitionist", this quote by Yara Shahidi is one that not only inspires Nafessa Williams but describes her perfectly. Known best for her role as Anissa Pierce on "Black Lightning", Williams is a fearless advocate for what she believes in, much like her character on the show.

Not only did this powerhouse leave a law office job to follow her dream of acting but she has used her platform to inspire change throughout the country.



Dress by Jodieanna, Sneakers by Sam Brown



Dress and hair by Jodieanna

**Imagista:** I read somewhere that you were studying to be a lawyer?

**Nafessa Williams:** I was studying criminal justice and was definitely looking into starting to study the LSATs for law school.

**Imagista:** What made you switch paths?

**Nafessa Williams:** I was working at a law firm and just was not happy there. It was one of those life-changing moments when you ask yourself if you can truly picture yourself doing something for the rest of your life. I couldn't picture myself working in a law firm forever, I felt like I needed to do something that was going to make me happy and that is how I ended up here.

**Imagista:** How did your love for acting start? Did you always have it in you?

**Nafessa Williams:** As a child, I was always fascinated by television. "The Cosby Show" really sparked my interest in acting, Rudy Huxtable sparked something inside me but I never knew where to begin so I didn't pay much attention to it. I didn't know how to achieve that dream so I went to college and figured it out from there.



**Imagista:** What was it like the first time you got on set?

**Nafessa Williams:** It was in 2011 on the set of "One Life To Live" and it was a moment I will never forget. I have always been fascinated with sets and everything that went into making television shows and was curious to see how it all worked.

I had actually done some background work prior so I was able to get a feel for it before ever actually booking anything.

**Imagista:** You are playing the first open black lead on television. Do you feel like the media is representing your character in the right way?

**Nafessa Williams:** I think the media has done a really good job of highlighting the character very well and I think that is because the show has done such a great job of normalizing her sexuality. There was no big "coming out episode" or any conflict with her family on who she was which allowed her to come forth as authentic.

**Imagista:** Do you feel a certain pressure representing this community?

**Nafessa Williams:** I never walked into the character feeling pressure to do it justice. I just walked into her and found her authentic self to tell our viewers unapologetically. I didn't put pressure on myself to do it a certain way, I just had a thorough background on the character as she is a character from a comic book, so I was able to get to know her through that.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MURRAY CLOSE FOR VOGUE

## the COVETEUR

Standing on the ledge of a window overlooking the city, Nafessa Williams forms a powerful pose. She appears calm yet confident, and her skirt blows in the wind as the camera snaps away. If she's giving off any kind of vibe, it's that of a badass superhero, ready to save the day. Which makes sense, since that's exactly who Williams plays on TV, on the CW show Black Lightning.

"It's really a dream job," she tells me after we've wrapped, her lips still covered in a shade of green—something she's, somehow, totally pulling off (another super power, I think to myself). Williams' character, Anissa Pierce, is the first black, lesbian superhero, and the actress is aware she's landed herself a history-making role. "Lesbians need to see themselves on TV," she says, adding that she researched what it's like coming out and potentially struggling with a stigma. "And at the root of it, it's just love, you know?"

Love is actually at the root of everything Williams does, from leaving her job in law to pursue her passion to representing her home football team, the Eagles, for a few of our photos. See and find out more about this star on-the-rise, ahead.



## the COVETEUR



*I know at one point you were pursuing a career in law, but was acting always in the back of your mind?*

"I've known since I was about six or seven that I wanted to be on TV. Rudy Huxtable and Clair Huxtable? It's all their fault. TV was an escape from some of the issues and the struggles of being in the inner city and wanting to get out of that environment. I saw Tatyana Ali, and I saw Lark Voorhies, and I wanted to be them because they looked like me. However, it's not the most secure thing, so it was something that you kind of put in the back of your mind; a hoop dream. Like, how do I even start? It wasn't until I graduated college and was interning, and even had a full-time job at a worker's comp firm, that I just was like, 'I can't do this. I gotta go get what's calling me.' I went on an audition, and they fired me for taking off. That was the start of it all."

*So it's good that you got fired?*



## the COVETEUR

"It was the best day of my life! It was the beginning of the rest of my life. I was the happiest fired person ever. [laughs] My mom and some of my close friends, at first, were just like, 'Whoa, why would you do that? It was such a good job!' I was like, 'Listen, Mom. You'll see me play a lawyer on TV, but it's not happening.' I think it's cool when you're young to try things. We may think we know what we want to do, but it's not until you're actually doing it that you can really decide if it's for you."



*You've talked at length about how your Black Lightening character is the first LGBTQ superhero, but what are her other standout qualities?*

"She's super smart. She's strong, she is bold, she's so confident, and when she believes in something, she fights for it—she doesn't care who's on her side. She's willing to fight for the injustice that's going on within the community, even if that means battling at the front line at a protest and going to prison for it. She's just one of those fighters and believers, and wants to see change in the community and in the world, so she's doing that through her superheroism, and using activism through that."

## the COVETEUR

*Do you believe in the Law of Attraction?*

"I believe in it wholeheartedly, and I act as if I believe in it. Things have been unfolding, all the way down to telling my friends November 2016, 'I want to play an action role.' I was like, 'I'm gonna get a trainer, and I'm going to take my workout up a notch and physically get myself ready.' That was November, and I booked *Black Lightning* in February. So, little did I know! But I knew, because I prepared. You just have to fight and prepare for it as if you know it's gonna happen. I believe that we can have anything. I don't believe anything is impossible—really."



*So what's the next thing you're ready to speak into existence?*

"I want to do comedy next; I'm really silly. I guess another dream job is to be on show like *Martin*. Maybe I'll create it myself! I want to be on *SNL*. I love improv, and I love just having fun and laughing out loud, and being ugly when you do it, and not worrying about how you look. Really getting out of your head, and fully being myself. I think what I'm most excited about is for everyone to see me in more of a comedic character. That's who I am really at heart."

*You were saying that you would like to model for Fenty?*

"Yes, yes, yes! I think Rihanna is so dope. I love Rihanna, I love J. Lo. They automatically come to mind when I think about fashion. Tracee Ellis Ross always kills

*the*  
COV/ETEUR



it—hence my straight backs, inspired by Tracee Ellis Ross. Tracee will have a fur and she'll be super dressed up in one of her mom's dresses, but then she'll wear straight backs. I like to wear colors. I like to be bold. I don't want to look like everyone else.”



*the*  
COV/ETEUR



<http://coveteur.com/2018/02/27/nafessa-williams-black-lighting-actress-first-lesbian-superhero/>

###

November 11<sup>th</sup> 2019

## Rising Star Nafessa Williams Dishes on Her Groundbreaking TV Role and Her Latest Film

By Jimmy Kontomanolis

From soap star to bonafide superhero, Nafessa Williams is certainly a woman to watch. Williams has quickly made a name for herself by taking on a versatile roster of characters across film and television. For three seasons, she's played an integral role on The CW's superhero drama, *Black Lightning*, where her character of Anissa Pierce became television's first African American lesbian.



We chatted with Williams to discuss her latest film project, her groundbreaking television role, and the evolution of Anissa Pierce on *Black Lightning*.

**Your new film recently hit theatres. Tell us about *Black and Blue*.**

**NAFESSA WILLIAMS:** *Black and Blue* is an action thriller about a rookie cop who witnesses her partner murder a kid through her body cam. The movie is led by Naomie Harris and I play her childhood best friend.

**What was the best part about preparing for this role? Was this as physically demanding as preparing for *Black Lightning*?**

**NW:** This film was in no way near as physically demanding as *Black Lightning*. I actually didn't have any stunts. The best part was being able to tackle a new character who is extremely different than my characters on *Black Lightning*. I never want to play the same kind of characters over and over so it was pretty dope to switch it up.

**Tell us about your role on *Black Lightning*—how has your character evolved? Did you feel a certain amount of pressure or responsibility representing a character that has yet to be shown on television?**

**NW:** Since Season One of *Black Lightning* my character has evolved quite a bit. She's matured a lot! She definitely found her identity as a super hero and is much more confident in her abilities.



**How do you prepare for television and film differently?**

NW: I actually prepare for film and TV the same. For me it's all about the character I'm portraying. Creating a world for my characters, finding our similarities and our differences, and understanding who they are so I can be a voice for them is an important part of my process.

**What are you looking forward to in the next few months?**

NW: I'm looking forward to the holidays. I just bought my first home and I'm excited to host and decorate and create my own traditions!

**When you're not on set, where can we find you in LA? Any favorite hangouts?**

NW: It really just depends on my vibe! Most days I like to kick it in the Valley. Studio City is probably my favorite hang-out spot. Other days I like to kick it on the beach, meditate and maybe grab Nobu in Malibu after. Honestly, I just love California overall. It's the weather, it's the vibe. LA is my favorite city, it's unmatched. When I was 11, I told my mom I was moving to LA, so I guess you can say I'm living my dream.

<https://laconfidentialmag.com/nafessa-williams-dishes-on-black-lightning>







October 24<sup>th</sup> 2019

## Good Day Atlanta viewer information



ATLANTA - "Black and Blue Movie" stars and director on Good Day Atlanta: A new action packed thriller is about to hit theaters that will have people talking.



October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019

## Nafeesa Williams talks film 'Black and Blue,' 'Black Lightning' series



<https://pix11.com/2019/10/21/nafeesa-williams-talks-film-black-and-blue-black-lightning-series/>



October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019



### The Cast & Director Of "Black and Blue" Talk About The New Action Film

<https://www.aol.com/video/view/the-cast-and-director-of-black-and-blue-talk-about-the-new-action-film/5dae03c88c3ae8660c59915a/?uccounter=1>



### GLAAD celebrates 29th annual Media Awards



LOS ANGELES, CA (FOX 11) - Thursday, April 12th was a big night in the 90210! GLAAD celebrated its 29th annual Media Awards! It was said to be their largest carpet yet! The GLAAD organization has been at the forefront of cultural change, accelerating acceptance for the LGBTQ community. The evening was hosted by Actress/Comedian Wanda Sykes and honored Actor Jim Parsons with the Stephen F. Kolzak Award and Pop Princess Britney Spears with The Vanguard Award.

Speaking of Brit Brit! EVERYONE (including myself) was super excited to see her and share the night with her! It was even a major talking point on the red carpet. Stars like: Jeffrey Bowyer-Chapman, Dennis O'Hare, Nafessa Williams, Gus Kenworthy, Fortune Feimster, Karamo Brown, Miss Lawrence, Melissa Fumero, Stephanie Beatriz, Betty Who, and Brock Ciarrelli chatted with me about the night AND told me their favorite Britney Spears song...impressions too!

The evening also helps fund GLAAD's work year round to build support for equality and representation amongst the LGBTQ community. For more information on GLAAD, go to: [www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)

<http://www.fox11.com/entertainment/glaad-celebrates-29th-annual-media-awards>





October 25, 2019



Sister Circle | "Black And Blue" Cast Talks New Film | TVONE

2,124 views • Oct 25, 2019

76 1 SHARE SAVE ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CItE56fy6nQ>



October 28, 2019

## 'Black And White' Exclusive: Nafessa Williams Reveals How Her Hairstyle Helped Her Get Into Character [VIDEO]



### 'Black And Blue' "Bad Guys" Speak

Last week our Senior Content Director Janeé Bolden had an opportunity to sit down with the [cast of 'Black And Blue,'](#) the action packed thriller starring [Naomie Harris as a rookie cop](#) who captures her fellow officers [committing a crime on her body cam.](#) The "villains" in this movie are really incredible — we especially loved Nafessa Williams in the role of Missy. Check out our interview with Williams, Mike Colter and Frank Grillo — who plays the movie's "bad cop" beautifully — below.



## 'Black Lightning': Nafessa Williams on How Beyoncé and Solange Inspired Her Character (Exclusive)

By Philiana Ng  
January 30, 2018



Jefferson Pierce isn't the only one harboring superpowers on *Black Lightning*.

On Tuesday's episode of The CW's newest DC Comics entry, Jefferson's eldest daughter, Anissa, begins to embrace her newfound super-strength, an ability she unexpectedly manifests through trauma after she and her younger sister, Jennifer, were kidnapped by the powerful 100 gang overtaking Freeland. As crime continues to skyrocket in the city and innocent black youth are shot and killed by police, Anissa seems more than willing to do her part to bring justice to Freeland.

"So much has been changing in my life," Anissa says at one point in the episode, contemplating whether she wants to jump into the dangerous world of crime-fighting (unbeknownst to her, very much like her father). "It'd be nice though, superpowers -- a way to make the world a better place, really change things." But something tells us it's not that simple. ET spoke with *Black Lightning* star Nafessa Williams, who plays Anissa, on why it's "time" and "necessary" for a show of this nature to be on TV.

<http://www.etonline.com/black-lightning-nafessa-williams-how-beyonce-and-solange-inspired-her-character-exclusive-94880>

# Entertainment

## Black Lightning Breakout Talks Playing A Black Lesbian Superhero

By Chancellor Agard  
January 30, 2018



Nafessa Williams is very grateful for her role on [Black Lightning](#).

On The CW's new superhero drama, Williams stars as Anissa Pierce, the lesbian daughter of the show's titular hero (Cress Williams) who is studying to become a doctor and discovers that she, too, has powers. In a time when representation in media is becoming increasingly more important, Williams isn't taking the responsibility of playing a black lesbian superhero on network television lightly.

<http://ew.com/tv/2018/01/30/black-lightning-anissa-nafessa-williams-interview/>



## 'Black Lightning' star Nafessa Williams on the CW's new, history-making superhero series



BY CANDICE WILLIAMS  
Jan 16, 2018

Nafessa Williams is ready to introduce her character, Anissa Pierce, to the masses in the new CW superhero series "Black Lightning."

In the series, which debuts tonight on the CW network, Williams plays the outspoken eldest daughter of Jefferson Pierce, a high school principal who moonlights as the super-powered vigilante Black Lightning. "She has her opinions; yes, she does, and she fights for them," Williams says of her character in a behind-the-scenes [video](#).

<http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/black-lightning-star-nafessa-williams-cws-history-making/story?id=52385708>



## Black Lightning's Nafessa Williams on Playing a Black, Lesbian Superhero

January 25, 2018



*Black Lightning* is clearly not shying away from social issues within its narrative, but the one that's potentially most exciting is the depiction of a black, lesbian superhero in Nafessa Williams's character, Anissa.

Anissa is presented as a strong, confident woman off the bat, but by the end of the premiere, she's also revealed to be openly gay. Rather than presenting Anissa with a coming out story in the first season, *Black Lightning* chose to reveal her sexual orientation and then move right along because this girl has a million things to do and stressing about her sexuality is not one of them. "[Anissa] owns who she is," Williams told TV Guide at the Television Critics Association winter press tour. "She has no apologies for who she is. She owns it. She's not hiding in the closet, she's come out when she's a teenager, they've accepted it, and we've been living boldly in that."

<http://www.tvguide.com/news/black-lightning-nafessa-williams-black-lesbian-superhero/>

# ADVOCATE



## Meet TV's First Black Lesbian Superhero 2018's Icons, Innovators, and Disruptors

By David Artavia  
January 16, 2018

History will be made tonight when Nafessa Williams slips into the role of Anissa Pierce, i.e. Thunder, in The CW's Black Lightning. The highly-anticipated show will also feature the first black superhero family on network TV.

The series centers around the Pierce family, led by patriarch Jefferson Pierce (Cress Williams, no relation to Nafessa), a principal of a charter school as well as an advocate for education. With his ex-wife (played by Christine Adams), Jefferson is raising his two daughters, Jennifer (China Anne McClain) and Anissa; the latter of whom is gay.

<https://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/2018/1/16/meet-tvs-first-black-lesbian-superhero>

# POPSUGAR

## Nafessa Williams Explains Why Black Lightning Is "Necessary For Little Black Girls"

By Terry Carter  
January 25, 2018



If you haven't caught up with Black Lightning yet, it's not too late. The CW series created by Salim and Mara Brock Akil follows the life of Jefferson Pierce (Cress Williams), a retired superhero who becomes principal of an inner-city charter high school.

<https://www.popsugar.com/entertainment/Nafessa-Williams-Interview-About-Black-Lightning-Season-1-44613313>

## Nafessa Williams on playing Black Lightning's unapologetic, badass lesbian superhero

By: Amy Ashenden  
June 21, 2018



"We're not fighting aliens, we're not fighting strange creatures, we're really fighting the social injustice – the issues that are happening within our black communities," Nafessa Williams told PinkNews.

Williams plays Anissa Pierce aka Thunder, a black rights activist who, for once, is not subjected to the traditional coming out storyline, but instead "walks boldly" as an out lesbian in Black Lightning, the hit new CW superhero drama.

"We've seen in certain films and TV shows where certain characters in the comic book world haven't been translated with that same sexuality once it's on film and TV," she said.

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/06/21/black-lightning-season-2-nafessa-williams-anissa-lesbian/>

###

## Nafessa Williams: 'As a young black girl I didn't have a superhero like me to look up to'

Nafessa Williams, who plays Thunder in Black Lightning, hopes her character will be an inspiration

By: Rob Walker  
June 2, 2018



It's a genre dominated by white, straight males, so American actress Nafessa Williams admits she was moved to tears when she pulled on her costume for the first time to play a black, lesbian superhero. "It was a moment," she says. "I mean, I'm representing a whole group of people who need to see themselves on TV."

Williams plays Thunder in the hit television series Black Lightning – and is in London this week to promote its second series and hopefully convert more Britons to what she admits is "not your typical superhero show".

<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/jun/02/nafessa-williams-black-lightning-thunder-interview-superhero-young-black-girls>

###

## QWEERIST

### 'Black Lightning's Nafessa Williams Talks Female Empowerment and Being TV's First Black Lesbian Superhero

"I think representation is very important and I'm hugely honoured, for sure."

By: Qweerist Editors  
June 1, 2018



It must be hard being a superhero, right? Well, that may be the case but 'Black Lightning's Nafessa Williams ensures us its also a lot of fun ("are you kidding me? I get so excited when I get to put my costume on!"), which is good news considering that the show will be back later this year for a second season.

In Netflix and The CW's most recent DC Comics television adaptation, 'Black Lightning' follows Jefferson Pierce (played by Cress Williams) juggle family life with the return of his superhero alter-ego Black Lightning. Eventually, Jefferson's daughter Anissa discovers she might also have a bit of the superhero gene in her too. The show is a landmark for television in that it not only features the first African American superhero family, but it also features the first black lesbian superhero in the form of Anissa Pierce, played by Nafessa Williams.

<http://www.qweerist.com/entertainment/black-lightning-nafessa-williams-on-being-tvs-first-black-lesbian-superhero/>

###



### Black Lightning's Nafessa Williams On Playing 'Anissa' And More



PHILADELPHIA (CW)- Philly's own Nafessa Williams popped by the CW studios and talked with Natasha Brown about her role as 'Anissa' on the CW Hit show Black Lightning. Williams says her character is very bold, powerful and a 'force of her own.'

Watch Black Lightning Tuesday's at 9pm on the CWPhilly.

<http://cwphilly.cbslocal.com/2018/04/09/black-lightnings-nafessa-williams-on-playing-anissa-and-more/>



## Philly's Nafessa Williams takes the lead in 'Black Lightning'

By: Kimberly C. Roberts  
April 13, 2018



In case you haven't noticed, Black super heroes are "in" right now, and West Philly native Nafessa Williams, who plays the electrifying "Thunder" in the hit TV series "Black Lightning," airing Tuesdays at 9 p.m. on The CW, is right in the thick of the action.

In the hit series created by Salim Akil and based on the characters from Tony Isabella's DC Comic "Black Lightning," Jefferson Pierce (Cress Williams) is a man wrestling with a secret. As the father of two daughters and principal of Garfield High School — which also serves as a haven for young people in a New Orleans neighborhood overrun by gang violence — he is a hero to his community.

[http://www.phillytrib.com/entertainment/philly-s-nafessa-williams-takes-the-lead-in-black-lightning/article\\_006ceb4f-b2c2-584a-bcbc-fbee7542ff72.html](http://www.phillytrib.com/entertainment/philly-s-nafessa-williams-takes-the-lead-in-black-lightning/article_006ceb4f-b2c2-584a-bcbc-fbee7542ff72.html)



## West Philly's 'Black Lightning' star Nafessa Williams blazes TV trail with her character

April 10, 2018



The superhero world is changing, and the CW's Black Lightning — one of the few television shows to feature a black superhero — is answering the call for more representation in the fantastical.

Philadelphia native Nafessa Williams, 28, is one of the three leads in Black Lightning, which airs at 9 p.m. Tuesdays on the CW. The first season wraps April 17, and the show has been renewed for a second season.

Williams plays Anissa Pierce, TV's first black queer superhero. Anissa's father, Jefferson Pierce (Cress Williams), has hung up his superhero uniform after years of an action-packed life. In medical school, Anissa learns of her super-abilities, and her father is forced back into action.

<http://www.philly.com/philly/entertainment/black-lightning-nafessa-williams-cw-twin-peaks-burning-sands-20180410.html>

## 'Black Lightning' actress Nafessa Williams talks about playing TV's first black-lesbian superhero

By: Phillip Zonkel  
April 17, 2018



Nafessa Williams made history earlier this year playing TV's first black lesbian superhero, Thunder, on the CW drama ["Black Lightning."](#)

That visibility is necessary.

"Black lesbians want to see themselves on TV. They want to hear and see their stories. Representation matters," Williams says. "It's why we turn on the TV. You feel left out when you don't see yourself."

"It's a long time coming. I'm happy to be apart of the shift," Williams says. "We will see more black lesbian superheroes on TV. We broke that mold."

<https://qvoicenews.com/2018/04/17/black-lightning-actress-nafessa-williams-talks-about-playing-tvs-first-black-lesbian-superhero/>

## 'Black Lightning' Star Nafessa Williams Hopes Her Lesbian Superhero Inspires Viewers

By: Nicole Massabrook  
January 23, 2018



Nafessa Williams is making history on The CW's "Black Lightning" as Anissa Pierce, soon to be known as Thunder. The character is TV's first black lesbian superhero, and Williams hopes she inspires viewers.

"I want lesbians to be inspired and to feel comfortable with who they are and walk boldly in that," she told International Business Times.

While superhero shows have been taking over, they haven't been representing every community equally. Gay characters haven't been seen much in superhero TV shows and films. That's why fans started praising Williams before DC TV's "Black Lightning" even premiered.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/black-lightning-star-nafessa-williams-hopes-her-lesbian-superhero-inspires-viewers-2644239>



# Glitter

## Nafessa Williams

She's kicking butt and taking names on CW's *Black Lightning*

Nafessa Williams plays Anissa Pierce, Jefferson Pierce's (Kerry Washington) oldest daughter, who happens to have a superpower of her own! If you want to know what's going on in this, you'll need to tune in every week to watch the bold, badass superhero action on *Black Lightning*, and there's been quite a strong buzz about Nafessa's down with glitter to describe the show. We asked "Saturday's Best" what she does with her best friend, her family, glitz, and the top five on her Spotify list. Read on to find out what's next on the horizon for this badass superhero.

Photo: © [unreadable]



you're to what you'd like to do in your life? Making sure you have a plan to do it. I've always wanted to be a producer, so I'm going to go to school for that. I'm going to go to school for that.

**GLITTER:** Who would you love to work with on set?

**NAFESSA:** I would love to work with Jordan Peele. I love his work. He's so funny and so smart. I would love to work with him.

**GLITTER:** Favorite place to shoot?

**NAFESSA:** I love shooting in L.A. It's so beautiful. I love the weather. I love the people. I love the food. I love the city. I love the city.

**GLITTER:** One thing of your career so far?

**NAFESSA:** I really love my new show, *Black Lightning*. I love it.

**GLITTER:** Who's on your top 5 Spotify playlist?

**NAFESSA:** Drake, Jay-Z, Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj, and Cardi B.

**GLITTER:** How can we follow you?

**NAFESSA:** You can follow me on Instagram @nafessa\_williams and on Twitter @nafessa\_williams.

# Life & Style

## star REVIEW

### Nafessa Williams

**THE SHOW I CAN'T MISS:** *Insecure*. It's so funny and different. I love the witty and fresh script. It's a show I can relate to.

**THE BEST MOVIE I'VE SEEN LATELY:** *Get Out*. It was clever, witty, funny and well-cast. Major kudos to Jordan Peele for a very clever and intelligent movie.

**THE SONG I CAN'T STOP LISTENING TO:** "Bruno Mars' 'Finesse.' It takes me back to being a kid — it's upbeat and fun. I really just love his whole album."



Nafessa stars on *Black Lightning*, Tuesdays at 9 p.m. on The CW.



## NAFESSA WILLIAMS & CHINA ANNE MCCLAIN ARE THE SUPERHEROES WE DESERVE



*Black Lightning* stars Nafessa Williams and China Anne McClain also stormed into Times Square to discuss what fans can expect to see from their badass characters this season. Nafessa also talked about how it feels to make history as the first black, lesbian superhero on television. "I'm so honored and proud to give voice because I believe representation is very important and it's beautiful," she said. "I want to play roles that are going to inspire and empower people and more importantly, when they turn on the TV to see a character that I'm playing. I want them to embrace who they are and really appreciate that and walk boldly and confident in who that is." Nafessa was raised in Philadelphia so she was very excited about the Eagles winning the Super Bowl this weekend. During the show, the actresses also gushed about being fans of Justin Timberlake and how much they enjoyed his halftime performance.

<http://trl.mtv.com/news/3063114/spencer-pratt-with-black-lightning-cast-on-trl/>

###

## SHADOW AND ACT



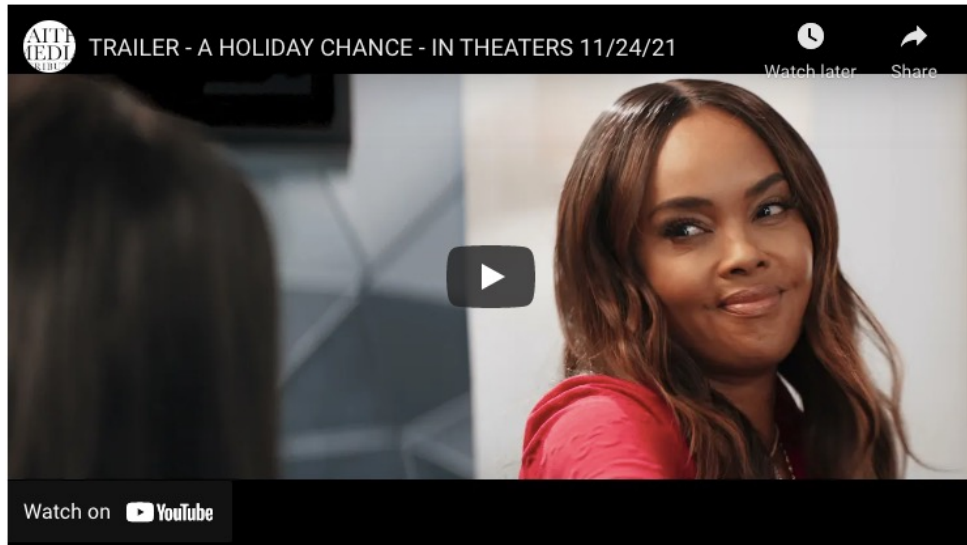
## 'A Holiday Chance' Trailer: Nafessa Williams,, Sharon Leal And More Star In Upcoming Family Film

*Black Lightning*'s [Nafessa Williams](#) is getting in the holiday spirit with *A Holiday Chance*. Directed by Jamal Hill and written by Curtis Bryant, the film also stars [Sharon Leal](#), Amin Joseph, Vanessa Bell Calloway and Richard Lawson.

The film follows a wealthy family who try to turn tragedy into positivity during the holiday season. According to the official description:

*“When the family of the founder of a multi-million-dollar film production company experiences some tragic events during the Christmas holidays, two sisters Noel Chance (Nafessa Williams) and Naomi Chance (Sharon Leal) must set aside a life-long rivalry and come together to turn the company around and keep the family intact.”*

Check out the trailer below. The film will be in theaters Nov. 24.



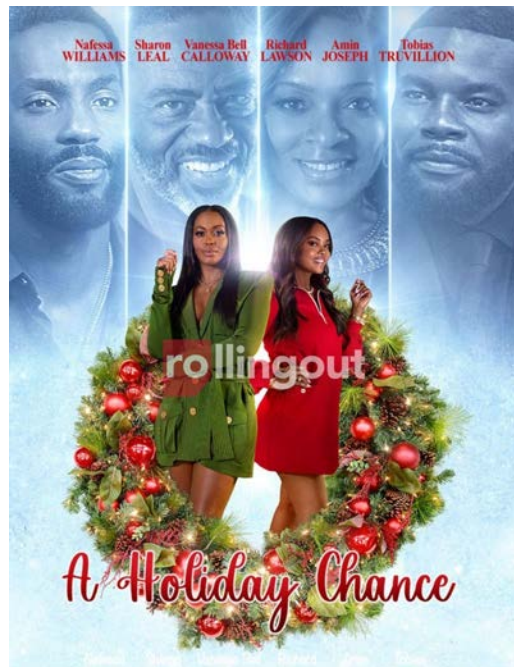
Williams is best known for her role as Anissa Pierce/Thunder on the popular CW series *Black Lightning*. She will also be seen in the upcoming TV series adaptation of *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*.

Leal is currently playing M'gann M'orzz on CW's *Supergirl*. She has also finished filming the movie *Traces*. She will be seen next in the *Pretty Little Liars* reboot, *Pretty Little Liars: Original Sin*.



## ‘A Holiday Chance’ shares message of life, love and laughter for Christmas

Producer Manny Halley scores another hit with a timely holiday film from a Black perspective



2021 delivered a number of holiday movies from Black production houses with Black directors, writers and producers. After scoring big with several gangster movies, Manny Halley, founder of Faith Media, decided to try his hand at a different genre.

Halley is currently preparing to release his first Christmas film, *A Holiday Chance*, across all streaming platforms. After his theatrical release of *True to the Game 3* did record-shattering numbers — raking in over a million dollars as an independent release during opening weekend — Halley’s foray into the holiday genre with *A Holiday Chance* has already paid off, scoring a cast filled with Black Hollywood’s best and brightest and garnering great reviews. His holiday flick focuses on the importance of celebrating life, family and laughter and not taking those intangible things for granted.

The film stars diva actresses Vanessa Bell Calloway and Sharon Leal, along with rising stars Nafessa Williams and Tobias Truvillion. It was important to Halley to show versatility and to continue promoting projects that celebrate the Black experience in its entirety.

“We’ve been blessed to work with Black excellence in all of our productions. We keep striving for perfection. We’re not there yet, but we’ve consistently gotten better with each film,” Halley says.

Halley tapped veteran actor Richard Lawson to play the patriarch of the Chance family. Lawson says he was drawn to the role because of the movie's overall message of gratitude and emphasis on familial bonds.

"There is no perfect family. Part of the beauty of family is the fact that nothing is perfect. If we could get up every day and write the script for the day and everyone play their part, then you would have a boring life. A part of the beauty of living is figuring it out and dealing with the unknown," Lawson says.

Lawson can speak candidly about the perception of a perfect family. Affectionately referred to by the Beehive as "Beyoncé's stepdaddy," Lawson's marriage to Tina Knowles in 2015 thrust him into an even bigger spotlight than his successful acting career provided.

"This movie deals with legacy and that was another big point for me," Lawson reasons. "To me, legacy is about so much more than money. What kind of person are you? It's about impacting culture and lives. I am proud that my genetic children and my bonus children are all incredible people and they make sure that the flowers are watered, so to speak. It's [about] more than just money. They make whatever they touch better because they have been there and given their heart and soul to whatever they participate in. That kind of legacy lasts longer than any kind of money."

Lawson says the holidays are special because they offer a time for everyone to reflect and appreciate things that should never be taken for granted.

"I've been in a number of Black holiday movies and I think they are special because we all relate to enjoying family and friends," Lawson says. "It's important for us to be involved in the creation of our stories from every level, behind the scenes, in front of the camera and every position, financing our own projects. I admire what my son-in-law has done with *The Harder They Fall*. There are so many amazing Black creatives out there and enough opportunities for us to keep moving forward.

"In *A Holiday Chance*, we see a family in entertainment and the daughter has different ideas than her father, who started the company. That relates to where a lot of us are now. I always say: 'Old-school work ethic, mixed with new-school technology, creates a winning formula.'"

Halley says he hopes families will watch *A Holiday Chance* together and take some of the film's subtle life lessons to heart.

"There is no substitute for love or family," Halley affirms.

The filmmaker's goal is to inspire what he considers his extended family, the entire Black community, to strive to achieve their goals.

"With all that is available today, there are no excuses," Halley says. "We all have the ability to be great. It starts with being open to learning and being willing to [seek] out the knowledge. It's OK to fail because it's a part of the process. What's important is that you stay in the ring and keep fighting. Eventually, consistency has to pay off."

*A Holiday Chance* is now available on all streaming platforms. You can view the conversation with Richard Lawson [here](#):