

## Powering Pluralism Network: Diversity & Representation in Media Cohort Members



### **Bishop Brenda Bos**

*Bishop, Southwest California Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

Bishop Bos is the first openly lesbian bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Before ordination, Bishop Bos worked in sitcom production for eighteen years. These two careers coincide beautifully, as both television and the church work to inspire and transform lives, working to find points of connection, communication and meaning. Bishop Bos serves the California Synod, which includes 110 congregations from Long Beach to Atascadero.



### **Mario Cader-Frech**

*Founder, DeeperDive.org*

Mario Cader-Frech is a Harvard Divinity School Fellow and Founder of DeeperDive.org, promoting religious literacy in Hollywood through workshops, trainings, and research papers.



### **Dr. Hussein Rashid**

*Founder, islamicate, L3C*

Dr. Hussein Rashid is a freelance academic whose research interests focus on Muslims and U.S. popular culture. He also works as a consultant focusing on religious literacy. His last major project was with the Children's Museum of Manhattan's exhibit "America to Zanzibar: Muslim Cultures Near and Far." He previously was an executive producer on the award-winning *New York Times* short animated documentary *The Secret History of Muslims in the U.S.* He is currently an executive producer for a multi-hour, multi-format documentary on Muslims in the U.S. He is a member of the Pillar Fund's inaugural Muslim Narrative Change Cohort, which works to bring changing representation of Muslims on screen.

### **Dasha Tanner**

*Assistant Director of Communications, Media & PR*

*Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding*

The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding promotes justice and builds respect for religious differences by transforming individuals and institutions to reduce prejudice, violence and hatred globally. Dasha Tanner managed the conception, construction and launch of Tanenbaum's new Representing Religion platform. Representing Religion is a resource that supports various media professionals in their process of building more ethical representations of beliefs in storytelling, informing best practices, fostering inclusive collaboration and emphasizing self-representational faith perspectives.

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**Nava Kavelin**

*CEO, Ninth Mode*

Ninth Mode is a production company dedicated to developing original content that explores human nature in all of its complexity, while giving special attention to the potential all people have for positive transformation.



**Dr. Yalda Tehranian-Uhls**

*Founder, Center for Scholars & Storytelling*

Dr. Yalda T. Uhls is an internationally recognized, award-winning research scientist, educator and author, studying how media affect young people. Her peer reviewed research has been featured in many news outlets including NPR and The New York Times. In her former career, she was a senior movie executive at MGM and Sony. Uhls is the founding director of The Center for Scholars & Storytellers, a research organization based at UCLA, which bridges the gap between social science research and media creation to support authentic and inclusive stories for youth.

Uhls is also an adjunct professor at UCLA where she does research on how media affect the social behavior of tweens and teens and teaches a class on Digital Media and Human Development and is the author of the parenting book *Media Moms & Digital Dads: A Fact not Fear Approach to Parenting in the Digital Age*.

Dr. Uhls' knowledge of how media content is created and the science of how media affect children inform her unique perspective.



**Esther Kustanowitz**

*Writer, Editor, Consultant & Podcast Host*

Esther D. Kustanowitz is an award-winning writer and podcaster, TV columnist at J: The Jewish News of Northern California, and contributing editor at eJewish Philanthropy.com. She hosts the Bagel Report, a podcast about the intersection of Judaism and popular culture and examines the increase of Jewish content on TV through her #TVGoneJewy project. She has also written for the *The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles*, *The Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)*, *The New York Jewish Week*, *The Forward*, *GrokNation.com*, *ModernLoss.com*, *Haaretz* and *Hadassah Magazine*.

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**Dr. Stacy L Smith**

*Founder, Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, University of Southern California*

Stacy L. Smith, Ph.D. is the foremost disrupter of inequality in the entertainment industry. Dr. Smith is the Founder of the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (All), the leading global think tank studying issues of inequality in entertainment. She has authored over 100 book chapters, articles, and reports, along with more than 40 studies at the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative on various aspects of entertainment, including the landmark CARD report in 2016 and annual studies examining inclusion in top-grossing films and popular music. *LA Weekly* named Dr. Smith the most influential person in Los Angeles in 2015. In 2019, *The Hollywood Reporter* named her one of 50 Agents of Change, and in 2021 *Billboard* listed Dr. Smith as an industry Change Agent.



**Dr. Maytha Alhassen, Ph.D.**

*Religion & Public Life Fellow in Media & Entertainment, Co-Executive Producer of RAMY*

Maytha Alhassen, Ph.D., primarily sees her labor as that of a freedom doula and an engaged wit/h/ness reviving the traditions of the feral femme. She is a historian, TV writer & producer, journalist, arts-based movement organizer and mending practitioner.



**Kalpana Kotagal**

*Partner, Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC*

Kalpana Kotagal is partner at Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC, where she is a member of the firm's Civil Rights and Employment Practice Group and co-chairs the firm's Hiring & Diversity Committee. She has been nominated by President Biden as Commissioner of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Cohen Milstein is one of the premier firms in the country handling major complex plaintiff-side litigation. For over 45 years, the firm has fought corporate abuse, pursuing litigation on behalf of affected individuals, whistleblowers, public entities and other institutions in cases that have raised challenging, significant and at times, novel issues.

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### **Dr. Alisha J. Hines**

*Director of Research, Center for Scholars and Storytellers*

The Center for Scholars & Storytellers is the only youth-centered organization that bridges the gap between social science research and media creation in order to help the next generation thrive and grow. The center works with leading social scientists to develop research insights and tools that are useful for content creators crafting authentic and inclusive stories for youth ages 2-25.



### **Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber**

*Public Theologian, Rocky Mountain Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

Rev. Bolz-Weber is an ordained Lutheran pastor, author and public theologian whose first memoir was optioned by ABC Signature to be made into a TV show which she is co-creating and producing with Krista Vernoff.



### **Jody Hassett Sanchez**

*Director and Producer, Pointy Shoe Productions*

Jody is the director of Pointy Shoe Productions, a documentary and long-form television production company. Her films have premiered at top film festivals, been broadcast in more than fifty countries and selected by the American Film Showcase. She previously covered religion, education and culture for ABC World News Tonight. Earlier in her career, she was the Global Affairs producer for CNN.



### **Brooke Zaugg**

*Vice President, Faith & Media Initiative*

Brooke serves as the Vice President for The Faith & Media Initiative at Radiant Foundation, a nonprofit that connects and provides resources to a global, diverse network of media members, content creators, faith leaders, and community members to ensure accurate, balanced representation of all faiths in entertainment and journalism. Most recently, she worked in the technology industry leading as VP and COO at various companies, and for a Texas-based private equity firm.



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### Kashif Shaikh

*Co-Founder and President, Pillars Fund*



Kashif Shaikh is the Co-Founder and President of Pillars Fund. Under his leadership, Pillars has invested more than \$7 million in grants to create opportunities for Muslims in the United States to tell their own stories, build community, and fight injustice through the media, arts, public discourse, and civil society. Prior to launching Pillars, Kashif was a program officer at the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, where he helped manage a portfolio that distributed more than \$20 million annually and helped scale a variety of Chicago nonprofits working at the intersection of racial justice, poverty, and education. Kashif's expert insight and writing has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Buzzfeed*, *Variety*, *NPR*, and *VICE*, among others.

### Dr. Joely Proudfit

*President and Owner, Native Media Strategies*



Dr. Joely Proudfit is, in addition to President of Native Media Strategies, the Director of the California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center (CICSC) and Department Chair and full Professor of American Indian Studies at CSU San Marcos. She has consulted and advised various projects in both film and TV including the Scott Cooper film *HOSTILES* starring Christian Bale and Wes Studi and Netflix's *SPIRIT RANGERS*. Native Media Strategies provides inclusive media strategies, consultation, access, management and oversight to help you navigate diverse Indigenous cultural content.

### Rich Havard

*Program Officer, Wayfarer Foundation*



Rich Havard currently serves as the Program Officer for the Wayfarer Foundation (WF), a grant-making organization that partners with spiritually-rooted and justice-oriented nonprofits. Prior to WF, Rich spent 6 years starting and leading the Inclusive Collective, a diverse spiritual community for college-aged young adults in Chicago. He is a University of Chicago Commons Project Fellow, a Forum for Theological Exploration Ministry Fellow, and a member of the Lighthouse Foundation's Coalition of Accomplices for Racial Equity.