



UMEZ GRANTEE CEO AWARDED NATIONAL HUMANITIES MEDAL
For Immediate Release

Contact: Hope Knight, 212-410-0030 x 210

NEW YORK, July 28, 2014

We are pleased to announce that Stanley Nelson, Co-Founder and CEO of Firelight Media, has been awarded the 2013 National Humanities Medal. This honor from the National Endowment for the Humanities recognizes extraordinary contributions to the field and is presented annually with the National Medal of Arts. These awards are the highest recognition the U.S. bestows on its artists and scholars. The ceremony was held at the White House with President Barack Obama and First Lady Michele Obama on Monday, July 28, 2014.

Mr. Nelson was honored along with eight other exemplary individuals and one organization. The citation read at the ceremony states:

“Stanley Nelson, producer and director, for documenting the story of African Americans through film. By turning a camera on both the well-known and unknown narratives of African Americans, Mr. Nelson has exposed injustice and triumph while revealing new depths of our Nation’s history.”

Kenneth J. Knuckles, President and CEO of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, upon learning the news about the Medal, noted: “Stanley’s impact on the humanities is well-known, but his endeavor here in Harlem, using Firelight Media’s Producers’ Lab to provide technical education and professional support to emerging documentarians, drew UMEZ’s support, as it ensures a future generation of talented storytellers from Upper Manhattan. Stanley’s strong reputation gives these young filmmakers in the Producer’s Lab access to national distribution channels, so that their films can be shared with wider audiences. Complementing this work, Firelight’s Social Action Division supports filmmakers who seek to broaden the impact of social-issue films and promotes activism, which is a large part of the spirit of Harlem.”

UMEZ has supported Firelight Media through its Cultural Industries Investment Fund with grants totaling just over \$300,000 over three years. These grants included both

(OVER)

technical assistance and capacity-building funds to create and implement a business plan to generate new revenues.

UMEZ congratulates all the Medal awardees, especially the other NYC-based medalists: choreographer and dancer Bill T. Jones, filmmaker Albert Maysles, architects Billie Tsien and Tod Williams, composer John Kander, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

ABOUT THE UPPER MANHATTAN EMPOWERMENT ZONE

Since its founding in 1996, The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ) has been a singular catalyst in the revitalization of Upper Manhattan. UMEZ's investments, upwards of \$220 million to date, have provided funding to numerous organizations, businesses and institutions that drive the local economy, create jobs, and add to the vibrancy of New York City. Significantly, these funds have also been leveraged to generate over \$1 billion in private capital investments into Upper Manhattan. UMEZ continues to be a leader in reestablishing the area as one of New York's most dynamic cultural districts through the creation of the Cultural Industry Investment Fund, established in 2004.

ABOUT THE CULTURAL INDUSTRY INVESTMENT FUND

The Cultural Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) was established in 2004 in order to support cultural institutions – from the iconic to the new and burgeoning – that serve as a powerful platform for the revitalization of the communities in which they reside. CIIF's strategy is designed to encourage long-term, permanent change within its grantees by building administrative capacity, supporting organizational development, and/or making needed capital improvements. Since its inception, CIIF has provided \$40 million in grants to over 50 arts and cultural organizations in Upper Manhattan.

###