

## New MPTD Director Angie M. Gates Joins Reel Talk with Film DC

**Leslie Green:** Welcome to Reel Talk with Film DC. This is your host, Leslie Green, Director of Communications for the DC Office of Motion Picture and Television Development, also, known as the DC Film Office.

We're sitting here today with Director Angie Gates. We're so excited to have her as our brand new director of the DC Film Office. Thank you for joining us today.

**Angie Gates:** Thank you for having me. Thank you for having me.

**Leslie:** Yes. First of all, let's get our listeners up to speed on who you are, how you came to the film to the film office, what's your background.

**Angie:** I'll start with where I'm from. I'm from New Orleans by way of Mississippi. Most people may not be aware I started my entire career in film. I started working with the film office in New Orleans under the leadership of Marc Morial.

We started with a very, very small office in New Orleans. We will promote New Orleans to producers and directors to get their films shot. Two of the projects that I worked on prior to my departure were "Interview with the Vampire" and "Pelican Brief."

After working with the film office, I decided to go into live entertainment. I started working at the Saenger Theatre in New Orleans.

I was able to take a little bit of my experience from the film office and instantly apply it, the movie, "Ray." All the concert scenes were shot at the Saenger Theatre in New Orleans.

Being in live entertainment, I was determined to go on tour. I wasn't satisfied until I could go on tour. Despite the warnings of everyone on tour, I was adamant about going on tour.

I had an opportunity to go on tour with Baby Face and David E. Talbert who's actually from this area. I worked on the project, "Love Makes Things Happen." After that tour, I worked with Bishop T.D. Jakes and Mathew Knowles on "Cover Girls." We toured then in several cities.

Once the tour ends, our gig ends. Shortly thereafter, I was asked to come to DC to manage the Warner Theatre. I was the first African-American general manager at the Warner Theatre before making my way into the political world.

**Leslie:** Awesome. It sounds like you have a very diverse background in entertainment. What was it like moving from New Orleans and the live entertainment space there to DC, was it different for you?

**Angie:** It was different. New Orleans, if you go and walk down the street, it's constant live entertainment.

Live entertainment for me started when a group of kids would put bottle caps on the bottom of their tennis shoes and tap and sound like Savion Glover. That's where live entertainment started for me.

In the New Orleans, it's very jazz-oriented, blues-oriented. When I was in school at the University of New Orleans, I received my undergraduate degree in drama and communications.

I specialized in film, my master's degree in arts administration with a special concentration in sports management. I was able to work directly under Ellis Marsalis.

In my particular department, I was working with the Marsalises and got a feel and a love and appreciation for music, live entertainment and film at that time. Then I came to DC and fell in love with go-go. Go-go is similar to what we refer as bounce music in New Orleans.

But what was very unique in DC is that it's almost like a Gumbo Pot. You have various cultures. You start to appreciate internationally so many segments of entertainment here in DC.

Go-go is specific to DC. With all the embassies, I was able to then be exposed to the French culture, the Italian culture. That really broadened my horizon there.

**Leslie:** I like that and now, as we were used with the Gumbo Pot. Tell me, did you always know you wanted to be involved in the media industry? Was that something that you grew up as a kid saying, "I want to be in live entertainment," or "I want to be in film, or media, or TV"?

**Angie:** It's always interesting. I would recommend any and every one to experience an internship or volunteer wherever you're interested in working first. I was probably a sophomore in college. I love to communicate. I guess coming from the South, I just love to talk.

I remember my mom asking me, "What are you going to major in?" I'm like, "I don't know. I'll just start with communications in general."

Then, I thought that I wanted to be a news reporter until I did my internship in news reporting. I did my internship at WLOX, which is a news station in Biloxi. We have this wonderful beach along the golf course. How many times can you talk about trash on the beach? That was the hot topic.

Then, it was just a constant deadline. You get the footage. You run to the studio. It's got to be done by the five o'clock news. I was very just shocked that here, I've set myself up with the belief that I'm going to be a news reporter, only to find out I don't like it that much. That's not the best use of my talents.

My dad was a jazz saxophonist. I was always around the live entertainment. I did a silent film in undergraduate. With a silent film, to be able to execute the message, and execute what you have to say without words, when I completed that project, it was like the light bulb went off.

It was bingo, I like this. I like the creative aspect of it. I haven't jumped from job to job. If you follow my path, I've built a career over time. It's been consistent. I haven't deviated.

**Leslie:** What brought you to the film office? What made you accept the job as the director of the film office?

**Angie:** I had the one full of opportunity of working with Mayor Bowser. I have such a respect and a support for not only the mayor as a person, but her political platform.

Following her message throughout her time from the campaigning stage, and just watching her executing her first 100th day goals and getting a feel for what she wanted to accomplish. Especially from the creative economy for DC, I was fully in support and fully on-board with that.

Her overall look of the arts and entertainment here, especially, in the film industry was so pivotal to my background and my career. It wasn't much to think about. Once I was considered for this position, I gladly wanted to accept, because I really felt that I could execute the goals of the administration.

Then, I have a keen ear to listen to the residents of the District of Columbia and execute the goals based on my experience and background.

**Leslie:** Speaking of your experience and background, how do you see yourself using your unique skills that you've developed over your career as the film office director?

**Angie:** What I have found that I've consistently done wherever I go in life is I bring whatever I've obtained with me.

I've fortunately been in a position that I've obtained a fast network. Individuals that I started working with in the film office in New Orleans are some of the same contacts that I have today.

In addition to that, I've dealt in live entertainment, music, private events, special events. When I was at the Warner, I worked with BET, and BET Honors is interested and I sit around the table at one phase of my career and within my first week in this position, sit around the table with those same individuals.

When you're able to pick up the phone and call someone and get a task done or a task started, that's the best way to have an impact. With my networking background, that's going to have a major part in the success that I can bring.

**Leslie:** Absolutely. Tell us what your vision is for the film office. What would you like to see happen in the agency that has not happened thus far?

**Angie:** I came in day one, it was interesting. I probably, let's say, I was asked the question what's my vision no less than twice a day every day for consistently three weeks.

It never was my vision. I never came in with, "This is my vision and this is how I'm going to make it happen." It's our vision. It's the vision of the mayor's, vision of the administration collectively as a whole. It's division of the council. It's the vision of the district residents.

Where I have made assessments and started to lay the ground work for what I want to accomplish is based on the information that I've gathered over the past few weeks.

For example, we are looking to update the rules and regulations related to the DC economic incentive fund law. Those rules were not updated since 2011.

Being in the film industry, incentive funds is a key focus not only for out of town productions, but local productions. We want to be able to execute those funds. It's important to go through step one and update those rules and regulations.

Also, too, what I thought was absolutely amazing is our sister agencies. I've worked very closely with the Office of Cable Television, the Commission of Arts and Humanities, the Public Access Corporation. What I have found is, if we work together, we can accomplish so much more.

Instead of just working on the instant day-to-day operations of the film office, how can I take our day-to-day operations and couple that with our sister agencies to accomplish bigger and greater things? You'll see a constant relationship with the sister agencies and how we'll be working together.

There's also a soundstage located on the BET campus, soundstage two. One key factor in the film industry is looking at soundstage space. Infrastructure is very important, television, film in that industry.

There's a space located on BET campus that I'm looking to work closely with BET to utilize that space as a structure that can be used for out of town productions, as well as local productions, and utilize that space for workforce training opportunity.

That will be the last thing that I'll bring up that's important to me with accomplishing over the next year, and then, setting up a workforce training and apprenticeship program where we can train our residents and the youth in the skill set of film.

You can build a career, arts and film. That may not be the key focus. Some schools don't even offer that particular program. I want to offer a workforce training and apprenticeship program to the district residents and youth. I'm going to work on creating that framework over the next year.

**Leslie:** That's great. What have you found so far is the biggest challenge for the agency and how do you plan to tackle that?

**Angie:** I would look at it more from the perspective. I try to look at things more as opportunities and how I accomplish them, more so than look at them from a challenging perspective. There are some opportunities. It's not just my decision.

When I look at an opportunity, I have to evaluate who all are the decision makers that have to be involved in order to make this opportunity happen for the mass, as a whole. I would say, if I use the word "challenge," it would just be with myself.

I'm so used to working at a very fast pace. Sometimes, I have to slow myself down and say, "OK, let's look at the entire picture, look at all the opportunities that are involved."

Let's eat a piece of a pie one slice at a time as opposed to just rushing to get things accomplished. As I said, it's not so much a challenge, it's opportunities and being able to accomplish those opportunities quickly, and with a sense of urgency.

**Leslie:** Sure. Speaking of opportunities, last question for you, what do you find most promising about the district's film and television scene?

**Angie:** What I find most promising...People talk about a gut reaction that they have in something.

Probably, within the first five days that I was here, something that we talked about a few minutes ago is I looked at all the people that were within my network and all the stakeholders, like Women in Film & Video, TIVA, individuals that I've met along the way.

I've realized how much there is an opportunity here for us to create our own story. We can do it from start to finish. We have the artists. We have the actors. We have the directors, the producers, both from a film and musical perspective. We have the writers. We have the location.

We have the team where we can do something that is only involving people in DC as opposed to all the national opportunities which I appreciate and I want to bring in those national opportunities here.

I want to have a product that people nationally are looking at that was created from beginning to end here in DC. One of our stakeholders mentioned a made in DC concept, and that's a priority.

That's what's most promising to me, because I can see a made in DC film, a made in DC music selection, something that has involved every single person in that project from DC. I definitely see that product being something that would get national recognition.

**Leslie:** Absolutely. Thank you so much, Angie, for joining us for Reel Talk with Film DC.

Hopefully, our listeners have learned a little bit more about you and the vision that you have for the agency. I want to thank all of you, our listeners, for tuning in to Reel Talk with Film DC. This is your host, Leslie Green, signing off.

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