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‘We’re Still in the Game’: 5 Hollywood Veterans Pitch Diverse Stories About Older Adults

Aging offers rich source of compelling stories, video says

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 22, 2023— Five accomplished Hollywood veterans—producer **Norman Lear**, actors **Mimi Kennedy**, **George Takei** and **Marla Gibbs** and comedian **George Wallace**— announce they’re still very much in the game in a new video about enriching the entertainment landscape with more stories about the vibrant lives of older adults.

“USC research shows that older adults are underrepresented on screen, with older women barely seen at all,” said Kate Folb, director of Hollywood, Health & Society, a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center.

HH&S co-produced the video along with Art Not War, a New York-Los Angeles based creative agency. It’s the latest original content from HH&S on the topic of aging and older adults, seen on social media platforms under #RethinkAging. Funding was provided by [The SCAN Foundation](#), an organization devoted to transforming care for older adults to preserve dignity and encourage independence. [Watch the new video here.](#)

“We’re still doing cool stuff,” said **Takei**, 85, widely known for his iconic role as crewmember Hikaru Sulu of the starship Enterprise in the original TV series *Star Trek* and subsequent films. The actor made his London stage debut recently in *George Takei’s Allegiance*, a musical play based on his life during the Japanese American internment in World War II.

Lear, 100, is seen gleefully noting that he’s the oldest person to win an Emmy, taking an award in 2020 for Outstanding Variety Special (Live) as executive producer of ABC’s prime-time show *Live in Front of a Studio Audience: ‘All in the Family’ and ‘Good Times.’*

“How about *that*,” Lear said.

Lear and producing partner Brent Miller have a full lineup of working projects, including a remake of *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*, and a Netflix animated version of Lear’s ‘70s sitcom *Good Times*.

Gibbs, 91, a five-time Emmy-nominated actress, is best known for her portrayal of the wisecracking maid Florence on Lear’s CBS hit ‘70s comedy, *The Jeffersons*. More recently, she joined the ABC hospital series *Grey’s Anatomy* (season 19) in several episodes as the grandmother of one of the new medical residents. In 2021, Gibbs received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in a ceremony attended by Lear.

“They said 91 is the new 60,” Gibbs said. “I don’t know where they got that, honey. Ninety-one is the new 30.”

Kennedy, “a mere child of 74,” is a veteran of TV, film and stage widely known for her role as Marjorie on the hit CBS TV series *Mom*. She’s set to co-star with Gordon Clapp (*NYPD Blue*) in the Arizona Theatre Company world premiere of Steven Drukman’s play *Pru Payne*, about a woman dealing with memory loss, which is set to open in March in Tucson.

“All of us are more than what we show on the outside, and so are the characters we need to portray,” Kennedy said. “We can still define beauty, passion, even sex.” About the latter, she adds: “Talk to my husband.”

Wallace, who at 70 is the baby of the group seen in the video, has brought his standup act back to Las Vegas, where he was a regular performer before the pandemic. His new sitcom with co-star Laverne Cox, called *Clean Slate*, which is being produced by Lear’s Act III company, was ordered to series. Wallace will also be featured in an ABC News look at the history of Black entertainers in Las Vegas, *Soul of a Nation Presents: Black in Vegas*, which will air in February.

“When you’ve lived a while, heartbreaks, setbacks, tragedies and triumphs—they all take on a deeper resonance,” Takei said, summing up why older adults and the rich lives they’ve inhabited deserve more representation in today’s culture and entertainment.

Dr. Sarita A. Mohanty, president and CEO of The SCAN Foundation, said entertainment is vital for reframing society’s views on the later phases of life.

“Not only are thousands of older actors and actresses ready to take on these roles on screen,” Dr. Mohanty said, “but they can share their experiences and offer rich and accurate storytelling. Can’t wait to see how Hollywood helps evolve our thinking on what it means to grow older!”

“You don’t want to write us off,” Wallace said. “In fact, you should write us in to your scripts.”

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HH&S, based at the Lear Center, is a free resource for entertainment industry professionals that provides accurate and up-to-date information for storylines dealing with health, safety and security through consultations and briefings with experts. Past and present support for HH&S has come from funders that include the CDC, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The SCAN Foundation, the Future of Life Institute, the California Health Care Foundation, the John Pritzker Family Fund, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. For more information about resources for writers, go to www.usc.edu/hhs.

The Norman Lear Center is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center studying and shaping the impact of entertainment and media on society. From its base in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the Lear Center builds bridges between faculty who study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. For more information, visit www.learcenter.org.

Located in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California, the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism is among the nation’s leading institutions devoted to the study of journalism and communication, and their impact on politics, culture and society. USC Annenberg offers bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees in journalism, communication, public diplomacy and public relations. For more information, visit www.annenberg.usc.edu.

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