

For Immediate Release:

Nominations for the 2017 Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics Are Open

Announcing Will J. Watkins As Director of the Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics & New Selection Committee Members Mark D. Bright, Don McGregor, Kevin Rubio, Cassandra Pelham and Gail Simone

September 16, 2016: Mad Event Entertainment and Long Beach Comic Con announced today that nominations for the 2017 Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics are now [open](#). This McDuffie Award has a new director, Will J. Watkins, and several new Selection Committee Members: Mark D. Bright, Don McGregor, Kevin Rubio, Cassandra Pelham and Gail Simone. The third annual Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics reception will be held February 18, 2017, in Long Beach, CA during the Long Beach Comic Expo.

The motto of The Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics comes from Dwayne's own words, "From invisible to inevitable."

"The Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics is the very first award ever established in my husband's name," said Dwayne's widow, Charlotte (Fullerton) McDuffie, "and we are tremendously proud that in just its third year, both the comic book and animation industries are already beginning to see some evidence of the DMAD's powerful mission statement demonstrably influencing reality by helping a more diverse range of outstanding creative voices finally find some inclusion in the media, with the careers of our first two winners and finalists starting to take off at major entertainment companies. To paraphrase Dwayne: Everyone deserves to see themselves represented in the media. And everyone deserves to participate in telling their own story."

To commemorate his vision and contributions, the new Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture, grand opening September 24th, has invited Dwayne McDuffie to be included for posterity.

"Everyone has heroes, but most people never get the chance to ensure that their hero's legacy will endure," said Watkins. "Dwayne McDuffie was my hero, and for the last two years I've been honored to be on the selection committee for an award in his name that promotes diversity and inclusion in the comic book industry. This year I'm doubly honored to be the award's director, and my efforts to ensure Dwayne's legacy endures will be nothing short of heroic."

The deadline for completed submissions for the third annual Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics is December 31, 2016.

"Long Beach Comic Con and Long Beach Comic Expo are committed to celebrating diversity in comics," said Martha Donato, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Long Beach Comic Expo, on the eve of Long Beach Comic Con. "This is not a fad, this is not an isolated moment. We are committed to diversity in storytelling. Last year, the number of submissions were three times that of the first award last year--and a third of those were from women. This is the future."

The Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics Selection Committee consists of twelve prominent comics and animation professionals who have demonstrated a commitment to McDuffie's vision of inclusiveness:

- **Mark D. Bright** is a storyboard artist for commercials, television and feature films. Prior to his career as a storyboard artist, he was an artist for Marvel, DC, Acclaim and Milestone Media working

on titles including *Iron Man*, *Green Lantern*, *G.I. Joe*, *Power Man* and *Iron Fist* and *Icon*. He is also the co-creator of *Quantum and Woody*.

- **Neo Edmund** – is a former child actor turned bestselling author, screenwriter, comic book writer, story development exec, and Virtual Reality director. He is the author of *The Red Riding Alpha Huntress* series published by WordFire Press. He is currently writing numerous books including a *Predator* anthology and the reboot of *Colt The Outlander*.
- **Joan Hilty** is Comics Editor at Nickelodeon and editor-in-chief of Pageturner, a boutique comics/graphic novel production house. She was formerly a Senior Editor at DC/Vertigo and syndicated cartoonist. She teaches at the School of Visual Arts in NYC and the Maryland Institute College of Art.
- **Joseph Illidge** is a Senior Editor for Lion Forge Comics, a columnist for Comic Book Resources and The Shadow League, and the co-writer of *Solarman* for Scout Comics. His editorial career began at Milestone Media, Inc. He then joined the Batman Editorial Group at DC Comics, and later worked for Archaia, now a division of BOOM! Studios. His graphic novel, *The Ren* will be published by First Second Books, a division of Macmillan.
- **Heidi MacDonald** is the editor-in-chief of Comicsbeat.com and a former editor for Disney and DC Comics. She also edits the graphic novel review section for Publishers Weekly and can be heard on PW's weekly podcast More To Come.
- **Don McGregor** is a writer whose notable comic books for Marvel Comics include *Jungle Action*, where he did the seminal work on *Black Panther* and *Amazing Adventures Featuring Killraven*, which contained the first interracial kiss in a color comic book. He also created *Sabre*, one of the first modern graphic novels. Don's groundbreaking career garnered him the Bill Finger Award for Excellence in Comic Book Writing last year.
- **Kevin Rubio** is a writer/producer who has contributed to *Justice League Action*, *Avengers Assemble*, *Thunderbirds Are Go!*, *Green Lantern: The Animated Series* and *My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic*. He is also the creator and writer of the Star Wars graphic novel *Tag & Bink Were Here* and Red 5 Publication's *Abyss* Vol. I & II. He is an inaugural recipient of the George Lucas Film Award for his Star Wars short film, *TROOPS*, a Promax Award winner and Emmy nominee.
- **Cassandra Pelham** is a senior editor for the Graphix and Scholastic Press imprints at Scholastic, where she has edited award-winning, #1 New York Times bestselling, and USA Today bestselling graphic novels.
- **Gail Simone** is a writer known for the DC titles *Birds of Prey*, *Secret Six* (for which she was nominated for a GLAAD Media Award), *Batgirl*, *Wonder Woman* and *The All-New Atom*. She recently wrote Dark Horse's *Tomb Raider*, Dynamite's *Red Sonja* and is currently working on DC/Vertigo's *Clean Room*.
- **Will J. Watkins** is a film and animation writer who is also comic book story/world-building consultant on *The Protectors* graphic novel published this year by Athlita Comics. He had a stint as an assistant editor at DC Comics and before moving to L.A. he owned Chicago's first African American-owned comics store and is currently writing a novel about the experience.
- **Matt Wayne** has written on many highly-regarded animation projects including *Niko and the Sword of Light*, *Cannon Busters*, *Transformers: Robots in Disguise*, *Avengers: Ultron*

Revolution, Thunderbirds Are Go! and the 2006 *Biker Mice from Mars* revival. He wrote the Emmy-nominated *Hellboy Animated: Sword of Storms* and was also a writer and Managing Editor at Milestone Media.—was the Managing Editor of Milestone Media, and is currently a Primetime Emmy®-nominated animation writer. His credits include *Static Shock!*, *Justice League Unlimited*, *Hellboy: Sword of Storms*, *Ben 10: Omniverse*, *Transformers: Robots in Disguise*, *Avengers: Ultron Revolution*, *Thunderbirds are Go!*, *Niko and the Sword of Light*, and *Cannon Busters*.

- **Len Wein** is the legendary animation and comic book writer who co-created *Swamp Thing*, *Wolverine*, and the wildly successful diverse new team of *X-Men* that debuted in 1975; He's had the distinction of serving both as Editor-in-Chief of Marvel Comics and Senior Editor at DC Comics. The Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Famer's most recent comic book *Batman "66: The Lost Episode* was released last year.

About Dwayne McDuffie:

Dwayne Glenn McDuffie was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. The middle son of Leroy McDuffie and Edna (Hawkins) McDuffie (now Gardner), Dwayne attended the prestigious Roeper School for gifted children before going on to earn undergraduate degrees in both English & Physics as well as a graduate degree in Physics, all at the University of Michigan. (Go, Blue!) He later also studied filmmaking at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

Dwayne first entered the comic book industry as an Editor at Marvel Comics, thanks to his NYU friend Greg Wright with whom he recreated the Deathlok character into the one in use today. With artist Ernie Colón, Dwayne also co-created the comedic Marvel team book, *Damage Control*.

Frustrated by the lack of diversity of both characters and creators in comics, Dwayne—together with Derek Dingle, Denys Cowan, and Michael Davis—co-founded MILESTONE COMICS (later MILESTONE MEDIA), the first African-American owned comic book company in history, with a mission to provide a wide array of characters, content, and creators that more accurately represent the racial, ethnic, religious, and gender diversity of real life. (Also? They were just outstandingly good books. Seriously. If you haven't read them, seek them out. Now. You won't believe what you've been missing!)

Static, *Icon*, *Hardware*, *Xombi*—to name just a few. Throughout his career in the comic book industry, Dwayne created or co-created these and more than a dozen other series, in addition to writing stories for too many other titles to list but here are some highlights: *Justice League of America*, *Fantastic Four*, *Spider-Man*, *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*, *Captain Marvel*, *Avengers Spotlight*, *Hellraiser*, *Ultraman*, even *The Tick*, and *Back to The Future*. Dwayne also co-created *The Road To Hell* with fellow writer and Milestone editor, Matt Wayne, the inaugural Director of the Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics, established posthumously by Dwayne's widow, Charlotte (Fullerton) McDuffie.

Dwayne transitioned into the animation industry as a Story Editor and Writer on the Emmy-winning Kids WB series, *Static Shock*, which he co-created and for which he won the 2003 HUMANITAS PRIZE.

Dwayne was also a Producer, Story Editor, and Writer on Cartoon Network's JUSTICE LEAGUE and JUSTICE LEAGUE UNLIMITED animated series, for which he received a 2004 WRITERS GUILD nomination.

With artist Glen Murakami, Dwayne redeveloped Man of Action's BEN 10 animated series into BEN 10: ALIEN FORCE then BEN 10: ULTIMATE ALIEN—98 episodes of what became and continues to be an on-going, blockbuster, 230-episodes-and-counting franchise for Cartoon Network.

Dwayne also wrote the animated features JUSTICE LEAGUE: CRISIS ON TWO EARTHS, ALL-STAR

SUPERMAN, and JUSTICE LEAGUE: DOOM, as well as episodes of WHAT'S NEW, SCOOPY-DOO? and TEEN TITANS, all for Warner Bros.

For his indelible work in animation, Dwayne was posthumously presented with the WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA's 2011 ANIMATION WRITING AWARD, the first African-American in history to be so honored.

The winner of 3 EISNER AWARDS for his work in comic books, 11 PARENTS' CHOICE AWARDS, 6 "BEST EDITOR" awards, the 2009 INKPOT AWARD presented by Comic-Con International, and a GOLDEN APPLE AWARD from his alma mater for his "use of popular art to promote and enhance human dignity," Dwayne McDuffie's life's work exemplified both diversity and excellence.

He led by example while presciently stating, "From invisible to inevitable"--now the motto of the "Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics." The man may be gone, but his mission lives on.

About Charlotte McDuffie:

Dwayne's widow, Charlotte (Fullerton) McDuffie, is a twice Emmy-nominated animation writer, best known for her work on Hasbro's My Little Pony and Cartoon Network's Ben 10 franchise. She is currently the first female chairperson in history of the Animation Writers Caucus at the Writers Guild of America.

About Long Beach Comic Con:

Long Beach Comic Con is an annual event held at the Long Beach Convention Center that celebrates comic books and pop culture and showcases the exceptional works of talented writers, artists, illustrators and creators of all types of pop culture. At Long Beach Comic Con, you'll find exhibitors promoting and selling all types of related products, as well as entertaining and educational programs for all ages, guest signings and meet & greet sessions with celebrities. Long Beach Comic Con is a MAD Event Management, LLC production. To learn more and purchase tickets, please visit www.longbeachcomiccon.com.