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New Television Series Aims To Highlight Minorities, Youth

By [Cailin Riley](#) - October 13, 2021

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From left, Ben Karlin, Miya Jones, and WVH-TV's Ernie Schimizzi.

Growing up on Long Island, Miya Jones noticed, over the years, a distinct problem — there was what she describes as “a gap in coverage” from various media outlets of people who looked like her.

In January 2019, she decided to do something about it.

More than two years ago, Jones, a 25-year-old Black woman who grew up in Wheatley Heights, created Shades of Long Island, a website and media outlet that focuses exclusively on minorities, millennials and Generation Z on Long Island, covering everything from sports and entertainment to news, events and more. The outlet also hosts Long Island’s largest business directory for entrepreneurs of color on Long Island.

Shades of Long Island will expand its reach this month, after creating a partnership with WVVH-TV Hamptons Television for a television series of the same name. The pilot episode, set to air on Sunday, October 17, at noon, will include segments on the history of the racially diverse Eastville neighborhood of Sag Harbor, with interviews with art collector E.T. Williams, former businessman and historian William Pickens III — who died last month — and Dr. Georgette Grier-Key, executive director of the Eastville Community Historical Society, and a segment on Latino art curator Jose Tutiven.



Miya Jones created Shades of Long Island to highlight the stories of people of color and youth on Long Island.

Bringing those stories to life, and to a wider audience, is the main goal for Jones, who partnered with 2016 East Hampton High School graduate Ben Karlin for the TV series. A sizzle

reel teasing the upcoming series presents viewers early on with the question: "Do you feel represented?" and quickly promises "We're here to represent."

That statement gets to the core of what Jones wants to achieve.

"Being a person of color and young person on Long Island, who was born and raised here, I haven't seen stories of people who look like me, and I want to fill that gap," she said.

Jones said she laments the fact that when Long Island is trending on Twitter, it's usually for something negative. She said that while Shades of Long Island is committed to covering a wide range of topics and issues and will highlight injustices when they arise, she's also likely to use the show and the media outlet to highlight communities of color in a wide range of ways.

Karlin, who started writing stories for Shades of Long Island in January 2020, helped foster the partnership between the media outlet and the TV station that led to the creation of the pilot episode. After finishing his internship with Shades of Long Island, he went to WVVH, and his time writing for the outlet came up in conversation with station owners Greg and Ernie Schimizzi, planting the seed for the partnership.

"They said it sounded like a good idea for a TV show," he said. "So we pitched them some ideas and made the pilot."

Karlin said he enjoyed his work writing for Shades of Long Island not only because he's been able to bring important stories to light, but also because in reporting them, he's increased his own knowledge of the area.

"Growing up in East Hampton, Eastville was a name I'd heard of but didn't know too much about," he said, pointing out that the community was founded in the late 1600s, and thrived for generations. He said he also greatly enjoyed interviewing both Pickens and Williams, important members of the SANS communities — which stands for Sag Harbor Hills, Azurest, Nineveh Subdivisions — the beachfront communities that were founded as a summertime beach haven for Black second-home owners who faced racist housing practices like redlining decades ago.

"They were childhood friends and experienced so much together, until Mr. Pickens's passing," Karlin said. "It was truly like speaking to living history. It was a privilege to meet them, and hopefully viewers will learn a lot."

Karlin and Jones are currently working on putting together subsequent episodes, and are hoping to film an entire season's worth of shows highlighting young people and minorities on Long Island.

"We really want to highlight the stories that don't often get highlighted," Jones said. "That's what Shades of Long Island is about."

The producers encouraged anyone with story ideas or tips to reach out to them on social media or go to their website, shadesoflongisland.com, and on Instagram @shadesoflongisland.