

PRESS RELEASE

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RHIANNON GIDDENS AND RISSI PALMER TWO AMAZING BLACK WOMEN PIONEERS OF FOLK AND SOUTHERN SOUL MUSIC FEATURED IN 2021 BHERC BLACK CARPET DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES MARCH 6, 2021

Two of the today's most influential Black Women in folk, bluegrass, and country soul music, will share the unique story of their struggle, success and future online on BHERC.TV in honor of Women's History Month.

(Hollywood, CA) – The Black Hollywood Education and Resource Center, announced today the second **Black Carpet Distinguished Speaker Series**, a free event providing Black filmmakers and entertainers a platform to discuss their careers, influences, latest works, and creative insights is set for March 6th, at 12:00 PM PDT. The series provides access to a broad range of US, international audiences and communities including colleges and universities and can be accessed online at www.BHERC.TV.

In honor of Women's History Month, this live event features two of the "Amazing" Black Women Pioneers of folk, bluegrass and country soul music, Grammy winner, singer, fiddle and banjo player, **Rhiannon Giddens**, and "Color Me Country" Radio Apple Music Country Radio Show Host and consummate country soul singer-songwriter **Rissi Palmer**. This event provides a rare opportunity to learn the little known history, influence, impact, and contributions they and other Black women like them have made – and continue to make -- along their groundbreaking journey. Participants will have unique insight into the struggle, and triumphs pursuing a career in country folk, bluegrass, Celtic, blues, jazz and R&B music, the African and African American impact on the art forms, and how they look forward to continuing to add their creative mark to the music industry and their impact on society in the future. Get their perception on the plight of women and other like them and what aided their progress and how they excavate, create, and promote the history of the African American experience through their music at the highest levels on stages throughout the world.

The first live virtual Black Carpet Distinguished Speaker Series was a timely and rich conversation between groundbreaking female directors, Gina Prince-Bythewood and Kasi Lemmons, on the urgency to tell stories of black women and disrupting the status quo. Academy member Evers-Manly facilitated a very engaging and revealing discussion. These long-time friends and filmmakers have been championed by Evers-Manly and BHERC since the beginning of their careers when short films from each filmmaker played at BHERC's organization's film festivals. Prince-Bythewood and Lemmons have both gone on to direct influential films including their most recent works respectively, "The Old Guard" and "Harriet."

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The **Black Carpet Distinguished Speaker Series** takes place March 6, 2021 at 12:00PM NOON PST at www.BHERC.TV. Register online Today at www.BHERC.TV. Space is limited

About the Speakers

Rhiannon Giddens is a celebrated artist who excavates the past to reveal truths about our present. A MacArthur “Genius Grant” recipient, Giddens has been Grammy-nominated six times, and won once, for her work with the Carolina Chocolate Drops, a group she co-founded. Most recently she was nominated for her collaboration with multi-instrumentalist Francesco Turrisi, *there is no Other* (2019). Her album, *They’re Calling Me Home*, also a collaboration with Turrisi, is due out this April and features songs of her heritage, sung to console her while she has been unable to go home to her native North Carolina due to the ongoing pandemic.

Giddens has performed for the Obamas at the White House and acted in two seasons of the hit television series “Nashville”. She has been profiled by CBS Sunday Morning, the New York Times, and NPR’s Fresh Air, among other outlets. She is featured in Ken Burns’ Country Music series, which aired on PBS in 2019, where she speaks about the African American origins of country music. She is also a member of the band Our Native Daughters with three other black female banjo players - and produced their album *Songs of Our Native Daughters* (2019), which tells stories of historic black womanhood and survival.

Giddens was recently named Artistic Director of Silkroad Ensemble, with whom she is developing a number of new programs, including *The American Silkroad*, an exploration of the music of the American transcontinental railroad and it’s builders. She has also written the music for an original ballet, *Lucy Negro Redux* (the first ballet written by women of color for a black prima ballerina), and the libretto and music for an original opera, *Omar*, based on the autobiography of the enslaved man Omar Ibn Said.

Giddens’s lifelong mission is to lift up people of color whose contributions to American musical history have previously been erased, and to work toward a more accurate understanding of the country’s musical origins. Pitchfork has said “few artists are so fearless and so ravenous in their exploration,” and Smithsonian Magazine calls her “an electrifying artist who brings alive the memories of forgotten predecessors, white and black.”

Rissi Palmer’s gift lies in reaching across boundaries. One of our most compelling singers, she is at home in R&B but made her mark in country, bringing the entire spectrum of popular music to bear on music she calls “Southern Soul.” The daughter of Georgia natives, Rissi was born near Pittsburgh and spent her adolescent years in Missouri. Raised in a musical family that loved both country and R&B, she sang in a singing and dancing troupe sponsored by a local television station at 16. She was offered her first publishing and label deals at 19, and in 2007 released the album *Rissi Palmer*, charting with the singles, “Country Girl,” “Hold On To Me,” and “No Air.” She followed with a Christmas single, an independently released children’s album, *Best Day Ever*, and an EP called *The Back Porch Sessions*. Her most recent release, *Revival*, has been critically hailed as her most personal and uplifting work yet.

Rissi has performed at The White House, Lincoln Center, and the Grand Ole Opry, has appeared on Oprah & Friends, CNN, the CBS Early Show, and the Tavis Smiley Show. She has shared stages with Taylor Swift, The Eagles, Chris Young, and Charley Crockett, and she has been featured in *Rolling Stone*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *People*, *Parade*, *Ebony*, *Newsweek*, and *The Huffington Post*.

Rissi can now be heard bi-weekly on Sunday afternoons on her Apple Music Country radio show, Color Me Country Radio w/ Rissi Palmer. On the show, the singer-songwriter brings to the forefront the Black, Indigenous, and Latinx histories of country music that for too long have lived outside the spotlight and off mainstream airwaves. Listen in as Rissi has riveting, funny, and necessary conversations with country music's most vital and underrepresented voices.

The **Black Carpet Distinguished Speaker Series** in entertainment features conversations with professionals in the entertainment industry across the globe. The Black Hollywood Resource and Education Center presents top Black professionals and other diverse talent and allies in entertainment, film, and television to discuss the real-time workings of their profession. Whether directors, producers, entertainers, editors, animator, marketers, cinematographers, music score or distribution. The Black Carpet is held online using ZOOM and is free to all. **Registration is required and space is limited.** To register log on to www.BHERC.TV.

About the Host BHERC

Founded in 1996 by Sandra Evers-Manly, the Black Hollywood Education and Resource Center is a nonprofit, public benefit organization designed to advocate, educate, research, develop, and preserve the history and future of Blacks in film and television. Through film festivals, award ceremonies, book signings, script readings, contests, scholarships, other programs, and special events, BHERC recognizes the contributions of Black men and women in front of and behind the scenes in the entertainment industry.

About BHERC.TV

A New streaming service launched in February 2020 that provides short film content — from comedy to drama, narratives to docudrama — produced and directed by Black Filmmakers. BHERC TV is a leading worldwide provider of narrative and documentary short films about the African American experience as well as content from across the diaspora and diverse populations. For more information about BHERC TV log on to www.BHERC.TV.

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