



**NATIONAL DOMESTIC
WORKERS ALLIANCE**

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Caring Across Generations and National Domestic Workers Alliance Announce *Catalina* As Grantee of \$50K “Storytelling with Care” Grant

The impact team behind ‘Roma’ and HRTS Foundation put the award-winning sci-fi short film, along with writer-director Martin Russell Johnson in the spotlight at industry-wide event.

LOS ANGELES, CA - Today, Caring Across Generations and the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) unveiled the inaugural recipient of their “Storytelling with Care” short film grant at the Hollywood Radio & Television Society’s (HRTS) “Storytelling That Redefines Resilience” event, hosted by Warner Bros. Television Group. The \$50,000 grant, funded in partnership with Participant and supported by the HRTS Foundation was awarded to *Catalina* - a short film written and directed by rising filmmaker Martin Russell Johnson that explores caregiving in the age of AI. *Catalina* was selected out of more than 200 projects submitted to the first cycle - reflecting a desire from artists to explore this topic that matches with the growing audience demand for them, as discussed during Thursday’s panel conversation about stories that redefine hope and human resilience.

Catalina is a sci-fi drama that explores the fragile intersection between artificial intelligence and human caregiving. Set in a near future where AI has replaced caregivers, a grieving son attempts to save his ailing mother by transferring her consciousness into their caregiving robot named Catalina. The film, which Johnson utilized his own caregiving experience to inform, blends Afrofuturist aesthetics with emotionally resonant storytelling to illuminate caregiving as a sacred tradition and a future-defining battleground.

“Care is about more than just providing physical support - it’s also about providing emotional presence to ensure the comfort and dignity of another human being,” said **filmmaker Martin Russell Johnson**, whose previous credits include social impact films featuring stars such as Terry Crews, Ariel Winter, and Oscar Nunez. “With *Catalina*, I wanted the story to be a warning that care isn’t just a service that could be automated for efficiency and profit - it’s a deeply empathetic act that deserves a human touch.”

The *Storytelling with Care* initiative was created in 2023, by the same impact partners behind the Academy Award-winning film *Roma*, to shape opportunities for emerging storytellers while expanding onscreen representation for authentic experiences of caregiving and care work that, according to research, viewers want to see. At its heart, *Catalina* is a love letter to caregivers - from overworked family members navigating bureaucracies to professional care workers whose labor is chronically undervalued - that centers care as the emotional core of the story.

The project illuminates underrepresented, intersectional caregiving narratives and prompts audiences to examine how AI may disrupt or enhance the deeply relational work that everyone will be touched by in their lifetimes. It also demonstrates why emerging technologies can and must be informed by and designed alongside caregivers, not just for them.

“When we think about technology and AI in the home, we often picture it doing tasks like vacuuming or folding laundry, but that misses what care work is really about,” said **Rachel Birnam, Cultural and Entertainment Partnerships Director at NDWA**. “Martin Russell Johnson captures this with incredible poignancy in *Catalina*, a story that challenges the idea that care can be automated and instead reclaims the dignity, humanity, and connection at the heart of domestic labor - work carried every day by women of color, immigrants, and caregivers in our families and communities.”

The announcement comes at a pivotal moment in American society. As the care crisis reaches its boiling point, with legislative guts to Medicaid being enacted as of this summer, and 40% of the population providing unpaid care in the U.S. - conversations around care infrastructure, labor dignity, and technological transformation have never been more urgent. While AI offers the potential to support care, *Catalina* underscores the risks of replacing rather than reinforcing human connection.

“At Caring Across Generations, we are on a mission to make sure our entertainment stories include care in the lives of people on screen in a way that reflects reality: which is that care is a universal aspect of life,” said **Lydia Storie, Director of Culture Change at Caring Across**. “What excites me about *Catalina* is that it shows how this is possible to do across any genre, even a sci-fi action thriller.” As part of the grant, Johnson will receive mentorship from industry-leading creatives and a complimentary HRTS membership to support his professional growth. The HRTS Foundation will also continue to amplify *Catalina* as a pathway towards elevating more of the emerging voices redefining representation and inclusion through storytelling.

“*Catalina* reflects the HRTS Foundation’s core values: bold ideas, fresh perspectives, and authentic representation,” said **Philippe Maigret, President, ITV Studios America and President, HRTS Foundation**. “We’re honored to spotlight a project that moves the cultural needle forward while providing opportunities for professional advancement for a creative colleague.”

The organization partners hope the success of this film helps close the care representation gap highlighted in two important representation studies. NDWA’s [Spotlighting Domestic Workers in Film & TV](#) report with the Norman Lear Center at USC Annenberg found that domestic workers are not only vastly underrepresented on screen, they are frequently depicted through harmful stereotypes that reinforce stigma and erasure. Caring Across’ research study “[Make Care Pop: What We See and Don’t See About Caregiving on TV](#)” found that only 10% of TV storylines in 2021 included care, and that care depictions by and large tended to reflect the experiences of white, heteronormative families and limited portrayals of aging and disability were more likely to reinforce negative stereotypes. With *Catalina* as its first grantee, the initiative takes a vital step toward bringing more nuanced visibility to caregiving and the real-life contributions of care workers.

For updates on *Catalina*, check out: <https://bit.ly/catalinamovie>. To learn more about the *Storytelling with Care* initiative, please visit: <https://bit.ly/CareShortFilm>.

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About Caring Across Generations:

Caring Across Generations is a national organization of family caregivers, care workers, disabled people, and aging adults working to transform the way we care in this country so that care is accessible, affordable and equitable — and our systems of care enable everyone to live and age with dignity. To achieve our vision, we transform cultural norms and narratives about aging, disability and care; win federal and state-level policies; and build power amongst the people touched by care. For more information, visit caringacross.org.

About the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA):

National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) is the leading voice for dignity and fairness for millions of domestic workers in the United States. Founded in 2007, NDWA works for respect, recognition and inclusion in labor protections for domestic workers, the majority of whom are immigrants and women of color. NDWA is powered by over 70 affiliate organizations and local chapters and by a growing membership base of nannies, house cleaners and care workers in over 20 states. Learn more at www.domesticworkers.org.

About the *HRTS Foundation*:

The HRTS Foundation is a stand-alone 501c3 charitable organization with a mission to provide education, training and resources to individuals from underrepresented perspectives or backgrounds and encourage and provide education and training in the entertainment industry. Learn more at HRTS.org/the-hrts-foundation.

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