

ITV Presents Fresh Cuts: ‘I was once a new director so I know all about the challenges of making your first film’

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Following the launch of Fresh Cuts, Executive Producer Lara Akeju shares the joys, the challenges of the strand - and exactly how hard it was to choose the final five pitches.

Fresh Cuts – a new strand highlighting the work of behind-the-camera talent – is set to showcase powerful stories reflecting and celebrating Black British lives today.

After more than a hundred submissions, ITV [selected](#) its five producer/directors who have been commissioned to create films as part of the Black History Month 2022 “Fresh Cuts” strand.

We spoke to Lara who is Executive Producer for Fresh Cuts as part of a secondment from her role as ITV's Commissioning Editor for Daytime Entertainment. In this role, Lara has overseen some of ITV's most loved shows including *The Chase* and *James Martin's Saturday Morning*. She also launched series including *Lingo*, *John and Lisa's Weekend Kitchen* and *Kate Garraway's Life Stories*.

What's been your journey so far?

I've had a really varied career, spanning entertainment, factual formats and documentaries. I spent 16 years as a freelance producer and director before taking on roles in Commissioning at Channel 4, Channel 5 and now ITV. When I became aware of the Fresh Cuts initiative, I felt compelled to put myself forward as Executive Producer, to support these new directors.

My production credits include *Beauty and the Beast: The Ugly Face of Prejudice* for Channel 4, *The World's Strictest Parents* and *Panorama* for the BBC and *The Real Bad Girls* for ITV.

At Channel 4 I oversaw the Rio 2016 Paralympics and developed series including *A Very British Brothel*. While at Channel 5, I looked after News and factual series and commissioned *British Airways: 100 Years in the Sky*.

How did Fresh Cuts come about?

Fresh Cuts was born out of the desire to do something on ITV for Black History Month that would have a lasting impact, not only on-screen but off-screen too.

What does Fresh Cuts mean to you?

For me, Fresh Cuts is an opportunity to kickstart the careers of five black filmmakers and to tell stories that deserve to be seen by the broad, mainstream ITV audience. I was once a new director, so I know the challenges of getting your first film made.

What made these five pitches stand out?

All five ideas felt fresh and original, dealing with important subjects in entertaining, relatable ways.

What have been some highlights/challenges along the way?

Making documentaries always comes with challenges but the five directors have risen to the occasion and are now deep in the filming process. So far we've had delayed flights, a heatwave and a national rail strike to contend with. But we've also had our first production baby, welcoming little Rainbow into the world!

What does Fresh Cuts mean to ITV?

Research has shown us that representation behind the camera is still an issue. It's a deeply structural issue and I think as a broadcaster, this is a step in the right direction.

We're giving a platform for Black filmmakers to take ownership of their storytelling – and we're also fast-tracking their careers by giving them their first film credit. ITV is very proud to collaborate with such talented producer-directors and to share with audiences their perspectives on being a Black Brit.

Viewer enquiries

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