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**CRITICAL MINDED WELCOMES RASHID SHABAZZ AS INAUGURAL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ADVANCING ITS MISSION TO UPLIFT CRITICS OF
COLOR**

Rashid Shabazz, a cultural strategist and movement builder, joins Critical Minded as the initiative strives to broaden the cultural conversation

New York, NY – May 5, 2021 – Critical Minded, a grantmaking and advocacy initiative that supports cultural critics of color in the United States, is pleased to name **Rashid Shabazz** as the organization's inaugural Executive Director. Shabazz is a dynamic leader whose work bridges racial justice, media and the arts. He comes to Critical Minded from Color of Change, where he led the racial justice organization's marketing and storytelling work.

Artists and entertainers are at the forefront of an urgent conversation about racial justice in this country, and they are demanding a more diverse pool of critics to respond to their work. Critics of color have also pushed for access to opportunities and resources so that their perspectives are heard in a field that plays an important role defining the cultural conversation and assessing the value of artistic work – a field that is, at present, predominantly white.

"'Diversity and inclusion' is already such an overused phrase; it means nothing if we don't see changes at the level of editorial and publishing, too," said **Hua Hsu**, a cultural critic and member of Critical Minded's governing board. "We're thrilled to have Rashid lead us in this exciting new phase of Critical Minded. His experience, passion, and vision will help us imagine how to rid ourselves from outdated orthodoxies, while imagining something exciting and new."

"This moment presents an opportunity to center diverse cultural criticism to decipher and make meaning of today's art, ideas and institutions," said **Shabazz**. "I'm thrilled to join the Critical Minded team to support critics of color at a time when their voices are so needed. As media and cultural institutions continue to make statements and gestures towards racial justice, critical dialogue is needed to hold them accountable. It's also essential to ensuring that artists' important ideas circulate."

Founded in 2017 with critics of color at the center of its governance, Critical Minded's mission is to help build a vibrant and provocative cultural conversation. Hiring Shabazz as inaugural

executive director speaks to the board's desire to connect the cultural conversation with the power of movements so that cultural critics' analysis is understood as essential to broader fights for justice and equity, from galleries to the screen to the political stage.

Since its founding, Critical Minded has funded publications, training, research on racial equity in cultural criticism and convenings of critics of color. In 2020, it launched its COVID-19 Relief Grants for Cultural Critics from Underrepresented Communities, which supported hundreds of individual critics who had been adversely affected by the pandemic. This year, the initiative has extended its investment by awarding twenty-five collectives with grants up to \$5,000.

As a cultural organizer and communications specialist who worked with The Source Magazine early in his career, Shabazz comes to Critical Minded with the belief that culture is the bedrock of how we bring meaning to our lives. Recognizing the necessity of a diverse and active range of critical voices to speak truth to power, he joins the organization with a keen understanding of criticism's role in building a more just and equitable society.

ABOUT CRITICAL MINDED:

Critical Minded is an initiative dedicated to supporting cultural critics of color across the United States, cultivating a vibrant critical landscape encompassing multiple diverse perspectives. Beginning with the belief that arts and culture are core to how we understand ourselves and the world, Critical Minded supports writers of color to expand the discourse to become more nuanced, varied, representative and relevant. Founded in 2017 by the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Ford Foundation and fiscally sponsored by Allied Media Projects, the organization named Rashid Shabazz as its first Executive Director in 2021.

ABOUT RASHID SHABAZZ:

Rashid Shabazz is a cultural communications strategist and advocate best known in the arts and culture community for leading initiatives that advance opportunities around racial and gender justice, education reform, the American criminal justice system. As a lifelong student of cultural criticism, Shabazz views the art of the critique as a vehicle for creating a more equitable and just world. He focuses much of his work on addressing the exclusion of critics of color in the media, and the importance of transforming the lens of cultural narratives, in the media and beyond, into one that encompasses all voices. As a philanthropist and grassroots community organizer, Shabazz has dedicated over two decades to helping sustainably elevate Black and brown artists and writers through work with organizations including Color of Change and Open Society Foundations' Campaign for Black Male Achievement.