

MICHAEL AJAKWE JR.

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Michael Ajakwe Jr. – A Life Well Lived One Frame at a Time

Emmy Award-winning Writer, Director, Producer and Founder of LAWEBFEST Leaves
Lasting Legacy

(Los Angeles, CA) There is no doubt Michael Ajakwe Jr. was a man with a plan. No achievement was more stellar for the Emmy Award winning writer than founding the first Web Series Festival EVER, **LAWEBFEST** that birthed multiple sister festivals around the world. Although the lights dimmed, Ajakwe Jr. did not slow down after being diagnosed with cancer in 2015 but continued producing the festival and actively participating in the international festivals. On May 31, 2018 in Los Angeles, California, the lights faded to black when Ajakwe Jr. succumbed to pancreatic cancer at age 52. His legacy and light shine on in each word he wrote, each frame he shot and each Web Series festival celebrated.

The plan was always to be a writer. He gave himself a deadline to become a writer by age 30. And according to plan he won a Daytime Emmy for *Talk Soup* on E! Entertainment in 1995 before age 30! A talented comedy writer, he wrote for popular US network shows including, *Martin*, *Sister Sister*, *The Brothers Garcia* and *Eve*. He wrote, directed and produced the TV comedy, *Beauty and the Baller*, based on his web series, *Who* which aired on Centric TV (now BET-Her) in 2017. He has written and directed 9 plays and produced 16 plays that have been nominated for 29 NAACP Theatre Awards, winning a total of 5 awards. In 2007, Michael adapted his one-act play *Happy Anniversary, Punk!* into a short film that he also produced and directed. The 23-minute courtroom drama about Black-on-Black crime won the Jury Prize and Audience Award for Best Short Film at the Mid-Atlantic Black Film Festival in Norfolk, Virginia. He was a member of the Writer's Guild of America (WGA) and Producer's Guild of America (PGA).

A pioneer in the web series arena before it became mainstream, Ajakwe Jr. saw a window of opportunity and founded LAWEBFEST in 2010. He created a festival that would celebrate and champion unsung web series creators on a level playing field. As quoted in the inaugural press release he said, "With so many web-based series in cyberspace, I kept saying to myself 'Somebody needs to put all these puppies under one roof and showcase them?' Then I started thinking, 'Why don't you do it?' So, I did. It's really not that deep." Known as the 'Sundance of Web Series Festivals,' he helped launch and partnered with others web-specific festivals around the globe, the first one being **Marseille Webfest** in 2011, Europe's first web series festival in the south of France. He was honored with a Medal to the City by Mayor Jean-Claude Gaudin and served as Honorary President from 2012-2015. The format was duplicated domestically in the U.S and around the world with Ajakwe Jr's blessing and participation. In 2016 he was on the Awards Jury for **Valencia Webfest** in Spain. Besides **Melbourne Webfest** (Australia), **Seoul Webfest** (Korea), **Rome Webfest** (Italy), and **Marseilles Webfest** (France), and **Valencia Webfest** (Spain), LAWEBFEST also has international partnerships



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with **Webfest Montreal** (Canada), **Rio Webfest** (Brazil), **Webfest Berlin** (Germany), **Sicily Webfest** (Italy), **SoFloWebfest** (Florida, USA) and **D.C. Webfest** (Washington D.C., USA). He has also served as Special Advisor to **Atlanta Webfest** (the first web series festival in The South). In 2014 he was Guest of Honor at Mexico's first web series festival **Baja Webfest**.

Ajakwe Jr. is survived by his wife, Tammy Ajakwe, his mother, Lady Patricia Ajakwe; his sister, Ethell Onye; his brothers: Robert Ajakwe and Dr. Reginald Ajakwe. His father, Chief Michael O. Ajakwe, Sr preceded him in death. . For more information about Michael Ajakwe Jr. and LAWEBFEST visit www.LAWEBFEST.com.

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