

BlackStar Film Festival Announces 2025 Film Lineup



Image courtesy of BlackStar Projects. Photo: Daniel Jackson

BlackStar Projects, the premier organization celebrating visionary Black, Brown and Indigenous film and media artists, is thrilled to announce the selections for the 2025 BlackStar Film Festival.

This year's festival will take place from July 31-August 3, 2025, with in-person film screenings at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, the Wilma Theater and the Suzanne Roberts Theatre. Parties and events will be held at various venues across Philadelphia to mark the 14th annual celebration of the visual and storytelling traditions of Black, Brown and Indigenous people from around the world.

All access passes for the festival are available for purchase [here](#); individual tickets for in-person and virtual screenings will go on sale in early July.

The 2025 BlackStar Film Festival is set to feature a total of 92 films representing 35 countries, including 20 World, 13 North American, 4 United States, 7 East Coast and 46 Philadelphia premieres. This year's films explore an expansive range of ideas and issues from independent filmmakers of the global majority, including the use of music as a tool of resistance, pathways to thriving amidst political repression and environmental crisis and stories that show the importance of long-term, sustainable community building.

Highlights from this year's robust lineup include the world premiere of Louis Massiah and Monica Henriquez's *TCB - The Toni Cade Bambara School of Organizing*, the North American premiere of Jenn Nkiru's *The Great North*, a special screening of Kahlil Joseph's *BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions* and the North America premiere of Letitia Wright's *Highway to the Moon*.

"We have a collection of films in this year's program that embody BlackStar's vision of cinema as a tool for liberation," said Festival Director, Nehad Khader. "Amidst troubling times, these filmmakers remind us of what is possible."

In addition to film, there will be a slate of festival programming in-person. Selections include the return of BlackStar Pitch—a live competition open to public attendance, which will award \$75,000 in production funds to a winning short documentary—presented in partnership with Blackbird, daily panels and conversations with filmmakers and industry leaders, along with a Friday night concert and celebration at The Barnes Foundation.

"In our fourteenth year we continue to view the festival as an urgent gathering for filmmakers and cinephiles of color," said BlackStar Founder, Chief Executive & Artistic Officer, Maori Karmael Holmes. "The need in this moment is not only for visionary cinema, but to be in space together around the work—to experience pleasure, rejuvenation and radical care in ways that push us towards action."

BlackStar Film Festival has grown in attendance year over year, with more than 17,000 attendees participating in 2024. Beyond the festival, BlackStar Projects continues to expand its reach with initiatives like the Philadelphia Filmmaker Lab, a year long fellowship program that awards \$50,000 in production funds to four local filmmakers developing a short narrative film. The program will culminate at this year's festival with the world premiere of the four short films that were developed in BlackStar's lab over the last year.

Among BlackStar Projects' other programs are Seen, a journal of film, art and visual culture, that recently published its eighth issue and the William and Louise Greaves Filmmaker Seminar, held in March with Stanford University's Institute for Diversity in the Arts. The organization also recently celebrated the addition of André Robert Lee, President & Founder, Many Things Productions, to its board of directors.

The full lineup of films is below:

16 ½, directed by Harlan Banks
A LUTA CONTINUA // ATARAXY 44, directed by Curtis Essel
A New Voice, directed by Mike Davis and Debbie Davis
Adamstown, directed by Andrew Bilindabagabo
All That's Left of You, directed by Cherien Dabis
all the love i could handle, directed by Ruby Rose Collins
Another Other, directed by Bex Oluwatoyin Thompson
Axel, directed by Stefani Saintonge
Binnigula'sa' (Ancient Zapotec People), directed by Jorge Ángel Pérez
Black Glass, directed by Adam Piron
BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions, directed by Kahlil Joseph
Bloodlines, Mississippi, directed by Crystal Kayiza
Boil That Cabbage Down, directed by Candace Williamson
Brick by Brick, directed by Victória Álvares and Quentin Delaroche
Bubbling Baby, directed by Sharine Rijsenburg
Budget Paradise, directed by LaTajh Simmons-Weaver
Bukra (بُكْرَا), directed by Alex Aljouni
Cais, directed by Safira Moreira

Carissa, directed by Jason Jacobs and Devon Delmar
Celestine (Florida Storm), directed by Allison Janae Hamilton
Children of the Waves (Enfants des Courants d'Eaux), directed by Kezia Sakho
Compensation, directed by Zeinabu irene Davis
Correct Me If I'm Wrong (Ru ni suo yuan), directed by Hao Zhou
Dear Sikhonkwane, directed by Sihle Hlophe
Della Can Fly!, directed by Jasmine Lynea
Don't Cry, Butterfly (Mưa trên cánh bướm), directed by Dương Diệu Linh
Dooni, directed by Kevin Jerome Everson and Claudrena N. Harold
Eternal Kinship (अनन्त नाता), directed by Arbin Rai
Exodus, directed by Nimco Sheikaden
Food for the Soul, directed by Chisom Chieke
Gazan Tales (غزة التي تطل على البحر), directed by Mahmoud Nabil Ahmed
Hanami, directed by Denise Fernandes
Hatchlings, directed by Jahmil Eady
Highway to the Moon, directed by Letitia Wright
Hosts for Half a Century (Anfitriões há meio século), directed by Typju Mỹky and André Tupxi Lopes
Images de Tunisie (صور من تونس), directed by Younès Ben Slimane
Kanenon:we - Original Seeds, directed by Katsitsionni Fox
L'Arbre de l'Authenticité, directed by Sammy Baloji
Lana, directed by Laetitia Angba and Julie R. Lissouba
Las Cosas Que Brillan, directed by Kristal Sotomayor
Last Hoorah at G-Baby's, directed by DeeDee Casimir
Leaving Ikorodu In 1999, directed by Rashida Seriki
Lees Waxul, directed by Yoro Mbaye
Listen to Me, directed by Stephanie Etienne and Kanika Harris
Listen to the Voices (Kouté vwa), directed by Maxime Jean-Baptiste
Love, Brooklyn, directed by Rachael Abigail Holder
LWC (Lazy White Cows) (VBP (Vacac Brancas Preguiçosas)), directed by Asaph Luccas
Maqluba, directed by Mike Elsherif
Move Ya Body: The Birth of House, directed by Elegance Bratton
Natimorto, directed by Ibrahim Hasan and Leandro HBL
Next Life, directed by Tenzin Phuntsog
Nobody's Word, directed by Camara Taylor
OCEANIA, directed by Valentin Noujaim
One Day This Kid, directed by Alexander Farah
Oríkì Oshun, directed by Elena Guzman
Otherworld, directed by Lokotah Sanborn
Piñata Prayers, directed by Daniel Larios
Possible Landscapes, directed by Kannan Arunasalam
Ree's Destiny, directed by Steven Mosley
Remaining Native, directed by Paige Bethmann
RUN, SISTER JOAN, directed by Wale Oyejide
Sabbatical, directed by Karabo Lediga
Seeds, directed by Brittany Shyne
Seek No Favor, directed by Elle Clay and Leilah Weinraub
Space to Breathe, directed by Juicebox P. Burton
Spaces As Traces, directed by Teo Shi Yun
Speaking in Tongues: Take One, directed by Christopher Harris
Sugar Island, directed by Johanne Gomez Terrero
Sun Ra: Do the Impossible, directed by Christine Turner
Talking Walls, directed by Marcellus
TCB - The Toni Cade Bambara School of Organizing, directed by Louis Massiah and Monica Henriquez
Teaching America, directed by Anurima Bhargava

Tessitura, directed by Lydia Cornett and Brit Fryer
The Debutantes, directed by Contessa Gayles
The Devil Is Busy, directed by Christalyn Hampton and Geeta Gandbhir
The Flowers Stand Silently, Witnessing, directed by Theo Panagopoulos
The Great North, directed by Jenn Nkiru
The Last Harvest, directed by Nuno Boaventura Miranda
The River, directed by Herrana Addisu
The Shadow Scholars, directed by Eloise King
The Sixth Borough, directed by Jason Pollard
The Volcano Manifesto, directed by Cauleen Smith
Third Act, directed by Tadashi Nakamura
Tiger, directed by Loren Waters
Twenty Three, directed by Wasima Farah and Kamyar Mohsenin
Two Niles, directed by Rodrigo de Janeiro and Samuel Lobo
Untitled (How High the Moon), directed by Rashida Bumbray
Viet and Nam, directed by Minh Quy Truong
We Want The Funk!, directed by Stanley Nelson and Nicole London
We Were the Scenery, directed by Christopher Radcliff
White House (Kasa Branca), directed by Luciano Vidigal
Why the Sun & Moon Live in the Sky, directed by Aisha Bolaji

Information on juries, additional programming and events will be announced soon.
For more information on the festival and its programs, visit
<https://www.blackstarfest.org/festival>.

This year's festival is presented with major support from Open Society Foundations. Other sponsors include American Friends Service Committee, Andscape, Black Public Media, Blueprint Commercial, The Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia, Color Congress, Eventive, Firelight Media, Hyperallergic, International Documentary Association, Impact Partners, ITVS, Kashif, Monarch Yoga, NEON, Philadelphia Foundation, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Points North Institute, Runway, University of Pennsylvania Department of Cinema & Media Studies and WORLD Channel.

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About BlackStar Projects

BlackStar Projects, founded in 2012 by Maori Karmael Holmes as BlackStar Film Festival, creates the spaces and resources needed to uplift the work of Black, Brown and Indigenous artists working outside the confines of genre. Beyond the annual film festival the organization produces year-round programs, including film screenings, exhibitions, a filmmaker seminar, a film production lab and a journal of film, art and visual culture.

These programs provide artists opportunities for viable strategies for collaborations with other artists, audiences, funders and distributors. BlackStar is working towards a liberatory world in which a vast spectrum of Black, Brown and Indigenous experiences is irresistibly celebrated in arts and culture.