

## BlackStar Projects Releases Full Schedule of Programs for 2025 Film Festival

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BlackStar Projects, the premier organization celebrating visionary Black, Brown and Indigenous film and media artists, is thrilled to announce the full schedule of programs, jury and award nominees for the 2025 BlackStar Film Festival, taking place from July 31-August 3, 2025. All individual program tickets are now on sale [here](#), with festival passes also available [here](#).

The festival is an annual celebration of independent cinema from the global majority and a one-of-a-kind gathering of diverse audiences centered on connection, discussion and learning, with nearly every screening followed by a Q&A. The world premiere of *TCB - The Toni Cade Bambara School of Organizing*, directed by Louis Massiah and Monica Henriquez, will be the festival's opening night screening and *THE GREAT NORTH*, directed by Jenn Nkiru and making its North American premiere, will be the closing night screening. Other highlights include a special screening of Kahlil Joseph's *BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions* and the 4K restoration of Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep*, with both filmmakers expected in-person for Spotlight Conversations.

*The Daily Jawn* will return at this year's festival as a live morning show. Co-sponsored by NEON and hosted by Maori Karmael Holmes, Rashid Zakat and Anne Ishii, the show presents conversations with featured filmmakers, festival programmers and other special guests. Additionally, panels featuring industry experts and thought leaders will be held throughout the festival, challenging attendees to consider new perspectives as they engage with the work. Notable guests and speakers at this year's festival include Letitia Wright, Charles Burnett, Kahlil Joseph, Saidiya Hartman, Cauleen Smith, Elegance Bratton, Adam Piron, Kevin Jerome Everson, Rachael Abigail Holder, Stanley Nelson, JT Takagi and Meg Onli.

"Each festival has been very special, but this year's lineup feels especially epic," said Chief Executive and Artistic Officer, Maori Karmael Holmes. "I'm looking forward to communing with filmmakers and audiences, sharing a collective laugh or cry. I think at this moment in time the restorative and liberatory power of cinema is essential."

In addition to film and panels, there will be a variety of other festival programming in-person. Selections include the return of [BlackStar Pitch](#), presented in partnership with Blackbird—a live competition open to public attendance, which will award \$75,000 in production funds to a winning short documentary—along with First Friday at The Barnes Foundation, featuring an evening of art, live music, cocktails and light fare, co-presented by Hyperallergic.

BlackStar Projects' [Philadelphia Filmmaker Lab](#), a year-long fellowship program that awards \$50,000 in production funds to four local filmmakers developing a short narrative film, will culminate at this year's festival with the world premiere of the four short films.

This year's festival jury, listed in full below, will consider nominees for Best Experimental Film, Best Feature Documentary, Best Feature Narrative, Best Short Documentary and Best Short Narrative.

BlackStar will also host a mix of parties and community events throughout the weekend including the opening night party at Cherry Street Pier; the annual BlackStar Bazaar, offering a curated shopping experience that celebrates community and Black-owned businesses and this year's closing night party at STAR|Bolt, co-presented by Visit Philly.

"This year's entire program has been intentionally curated to meet the moment," said Festival Director Nehad Khader. "We can't wait to welcome our community to Philadelphia to celebrate cinema for liberation."

All access passes for the festival are available for purchase [here](#) and individual tickets for in-person and virtual screenings are available [here](#). The full schedule of programs is below (all times EST):

### **Events & Panels:**

- BlackStar Pitch - Thursday, July 31 @ 10am — Wilma Theater
- StoryCorps Presents: Brightness in Black - Thursday, July 31 @ 2pm — The Daily Jawn Stage, Kimmel Center
- Reclaiming the Reel, co-presented by Color Congress  
Thursday, July 31 @ 5:30pm — The Daily Jawn Stage, Kimmel Center  
with Ambreen Qureshi, Charlie Raboteau, Ginou Choueiri and JT Takagi; moderated by Sahar Driver and Sonya Childress
- Yoga with Monarch Yoga - Friday, August 1 @ 9:00am, Saturday, August 2 @ 9:00am, Sunday, August 3 @ 9:00am — Kimmel Center
- The Daily Jawn Morning Show - Friday, August 1 @ 10:00am, Saturday, August 2 @ 10:00am, Sunday, August 3 @ 10:00am — The Daily Jawn Stage, Kimmel Center
- The Politics of Perspective  
Friday, August 1 @ 2:30pm — The Daily Jawn Stage, Kimmel Center  
with Lana Garland, Laurens Grant, Rafael Samanez and Shola Lynch; moderated by Natalie Bullock Brown
- Black Media Legacy, co-presented by Firelight Media's Beyond Resilience Series  
Friday, August 1 @ 5:30pm — The Daily Jawn Stage, Kimmel Center  
with Louis Massiah and Marcia Smith; moderated by Maori Karmael Holmes
- BlackStar Bazaar - Saturday, August 2 @ 12:00pm, Sunday, August 3 @ 12:00pm — Kimmel Center Tier 2 Lounge
- Spotlight Conversation: *BLKNWS*  
Saturday, August 2 @ 2:00pm — The Daily Jawn Stage, Kimmel Center  
with Kahlil Joseph and Onye Anyanwu; moderated by Yaba Blay
- Black Music as Resistance, co-presented by Firelight Media's Beyond Resilience Series  
Saturday, August 2 @ 5:30pm — The Daily Jawn Stage, Kimmel Center  
with Elegance Bratton, Christine Turner, Joseph Patel and Stanley Nelson; moderated by DJ Lynnée Denise
- Spotlight Conversation: Charles Burnett - Sunday, August 3 @ 2:30pm — The Daily Jawn Stage, Kimmel Center
- Neither Saints Nor Sinners  
Sunday, August 3 @ 5:30pm — The Daily Jawn Stage, Kimmel Center  
with Adam Piron, Heidi Saman, Kevin Jerome Everson and Rachael Abigail Holder; moderated by Meg Onli

### **Major Spotlights:**

- *TCB - The Toni Cade Bambara School of Organizing* (w/ Q&A) - Thursday, July 31 @ 8:00pm — Kimmel Center
- *BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions* - Friday, August 1 @ 9:00pm — Kimmel Center
- *Killer of Sheep* - Sunday, August 3 @ 11:30am — Wilma Theater
- *THE GREAT NORTH* (w/ Q&A) - Sunday, August 3 @ 8:30pm — Kimmel Center

### **Shorts Programs:**

- In Memoriam (w/ Q&A) - Thursday, July 31 @ 2:00pm — Kimmel Center  
Featuring: *Highway to the Moon*, *Oceania*, *A Luta Continua* // *Ataraxy 44*, *Natimorto*
- Jamaa (w/ Q&A) - Thursday, July 31 @ 4:00pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre  
Featuring: *Hatchlings*, *Eternal Kinship*, *Lana*, *Lees Waxul (Unspoken)*, *One Day This Kid*

- Antecessor (w/ Q&A) - Thursday, July 31 @ 5:00pm — Kimmel Center  
Featuring: *Della Can Fly!*, *Maqluba*, *Last Hoorah at G-Baby's*, *Talking Walls*
- Framed (w/ Q&A) - Thursday, July 31 @ 7:30pm — Wilma Theater  
Featuring: *Black Glass*, *Another Other*, *The Flowers Stand Silently*, *Witnessing, all the love i could handle*, *Two Niles (Dois Nilos)*, *We Were the Scenery*
- Revel (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 11:00am — Wilma Theater  
Featuring: *Speaking in Tongues: Take One*, *Tessitura*, *Bubbling Baby*, *Boil That Cabbage*

#### Down

- Dawning (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 12:00pm — Kimmel Center  
Featuring: *Axel*, *Bukra*, *Leaving Ikorodu in 1999*, *The Last Harvest*, *Children of the Waves (Enfants des Courants d'Eaux)*, *Teaching America*
- Abolish! (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 3:00pm — Kimmel Center  
Featuring: *A New Voice*, *Exodus*, *Space to Breathe*
- Ebullience (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 8:30pm — Wilma Theater  
Featuring: *Why the Sun & Moon Live in the Sky*, *Budget Paradise*, *Ree's Destiny*, *Seek No Favor*, *LWC (Lazy White Cows) (VBP - Vacas Brancas Preguiçosas)*
- Orison (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 9:30pm — Kimmel Center  
Featuring: *Twenty Three*, *Oriki Oshun*, *Untitled (How High the Moon)*, *Celestine (Florida Storm)*, *The River*
- Terrain (w/ Q&A) - Sunday, August 3 @ 11:00am — Kimmel Center  
Featuring: *Otherworld*, *spaces as traces*, *Images de Tunisie*, *Hosts for Half a Century (Anfitriões há meio século)*
- Philly Filmmaker Lab Films (w/ Q&A) - Sunday, August 3 @ 5:30pm — Kimmel Center  
Featuring: *Adamstown*, *Run*, *Sister Joan*, *Las Cosas Que Brillan (Shiny Objects)*, *Food for the Soul*
- Wellspring (w/ Q&A) - Sunday, August 3 @ 6:30pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre  
Featuring: *nobody's word*, *Dear Sikhonkwane*, *Piñata Prayers*, *如你所愿 (Correct Me If I'm Wrong)*, *Tiger*
- Galvanize (w/ Q&A) - Sunday, August 3 @ 7:30pm — Wilma Theater  
Featuring: *Kanennon:we – Original Seeds*, *Bloodlines*, *Mississippi*, *The Devil Is Busy*

#### Feature Film Screenings:

- *Listen to the Voices (Kouté vwa)* (w/ Q&A) - Thursday, July 31 @ 10:30am — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *Don't Cry, Butterfly (Mu'a trên cánh bu'ó'm)* - Thursday, July 31 @ 11:00am — Kimmel Center
- *Sugar Island* - Thursday, July 31 @ 1:00pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *Hanami* (w/ Q&A) - Thursday, July 31 @ 1:30pm — Wilma Theater
- *Next Life* (w/ Q&A) - Thursday, July 31 @ 4:30pm — Wilma Theater
- *Cais* (w/ Q&A) - Thursday, July 31 @ 7:00pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *The Shadow Scholars* (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 11:30am — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *Compensation* (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 2:00pm — Wilma Theater
- *Binnigula'sa' (Ancient Zapotec People)* (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 2:30pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *Seeds* (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 5:00pm — Wilma Theater
- *All That's Left of You* (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 5:30pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *Third Act* (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 6:00pm — Kimmel Center
- *We Want the Funk!* (w/ Q&A) - Friday, August 1 @ 9:30pm — Kimmel Center
- *White House (Kasa Branca)* - Saturday, August 2 @ 10:00am — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *Viet and Nam (Trong lòng đất)* - Saturday, August 2 @ 10:30am — Wilma Theater
- *L'Arbre de l'Authenticité (The Tree of Authenticity)* - Saturday, August 2 @ 11:00am — Kimmel Center
- *The Debutantes* - Saturday, August 2 @ 12:30pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *Remaining Native* (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 1:30pm — Kimmel Center
- *Sun Ra: Do the Impossible* (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 2:00pm — Wilma Theater
- *Gazan Tales* (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 3:30pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *16 ½* (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 4:30pm — Kimmel Center
- *Carissa* (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 5:00pm — Wilma Theater
- *The Sixth Borough* (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 6:30pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *The Volcano Manifesto* (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 7:00pm — Kimmel Center
- *Sabbatical* (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 8:00pm — Wilma Theater
- *Move Ya Body: The Birth of House* (w/ Q&A) - Saturday, August 2 @ 9:00pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *Brick by Brick (Tijolo por tijolo)* (w/ Q&A) - Sunday, August 3 @ 1:30pm — Wilma Theater
- *Love, Brooklyn* (w/ Q&A) - Sunday, August 3 @ 2:00pm — Kimmel Center
- *Possible Landscapes* (w/ Q&A) - Sunday, August 3 @ 3:00pm — Suzanne Roberts Theatre
- *Listen to Me* (w/ Q&A) - Sunday, August 3 @ 4:30pm — Wilma Theater

#### Parties:

- Opening Night Party - Thursday, July 31 @ 9:30pm — Cherry Street Pier

- First Friday at the Barnes co-presented by Hyperallergic - Friday, August 1 @ 6:00pm — Barnes Foundation
- Closing Night Party co-presented by Visit Philly - Sunday, August 3 @ 9:30pm — STAR|Bolt

## ***BlackStar Juried Awards Categories & Nominees:***

### Best Feature Documentary

#### *Nominees:*

- *16 ½* directed by Harlan Banks
- *THE GREAT NORTH* directed by Jenn Nkiru
- *TCB – The Toni Cade Bambara School of Organizing* directed by Louis Massiah and Monica Henriquez

*Jurors:* Asad Muhammad, Bao Nguyen, Tracy Rector

### Best Short Documentary

#### *Nominees:*

- *如你所愿 (Correct Me If I'm Wrong)* directed by Hao Zhou
- *The Devil Is Busy* directed by Christalyn Hampton and Geeta Gandbhir
- *Piñata Prayers* directed by Daniel Larios
- *Tessitura* directed by Lydia Cornett and Brit Fryer
- *Tiger* directed by Loren Waters
- *We Were the Scenery* directed by Christopher Radcliff

*Jurors:* Nell Augustin, Sonya Childress, Zaina Bseis

### Best Feature Narrative

#### *Nominees:*

- *Sabbatical* directed by Karabo Lediga
- *Sugar Island* directed by Johanne Gomez Terrero
- *White House (Kasa Branca)* directed by Luciano Vidigal

*Jurors:* Aseye Tamakloe, Jason Reynolds, Lindsay Monture

### Best Short Narrative

#### *Nominees:*

- *Eternal Kinship* directed by Arbin Rai
- *The Last Harvest* directed by Nuno Boaventura Miranda
- *Leaving Ikorodu in 1999* directed by Rashida Seriki
- *LWC - Lazy White Cows* directed by Asaph Luccas
- *Oceania* directed by Valentin Noujaïm
- *Seek No Favor* directed by Elle Clay and Leilah Weinraub

*Jurors:* Dagmawi Woubshet, Fariha Róisín, Lynnée Denise

### Best Experimental Film

#### *Nominees:*

- *A Luta Continua // Ataraxy 44* directed by Curtis Essel
- *Natimorto* directed by Ibrahem Hasan and Leandro HBL
- *The River* directed by Herrana Addisu
- *Untitled (How High the Moon)* directed by Rashida Bumbray
- *The Volcano Manifesto* directed by Cauleen Smith

*Jurors:* Awa Konaté, Emily Jacir, Jason Moran

### Additional Awards

- Philadelphia Filmmaker Award
- Shine Award for First-Time Filmmakers (Voted by BlackStar Members)

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, The Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia, Color Congress, Eventive, Firelight Media, Hyperallergic, Impact Partners, Independence Public Media Foundation, ITVS, Kashif, Monarch Yoga, NEON, PECO, Philadelphia Foundation, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pillars Fund, Runway, SAGIndie, State Representative Rick Krajewski, StoryCorps, Ten to One Rum, Twenty43, University of Pennsylvania Department of Cinema & Media Studies, Visit Philadelphia 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.