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Media Contact:  
[press@paff.org](mailto:press@paff.org)

## **Pan African Film & Arts Festival Announces Winners of 2025 Film Festival at Awards Brunch Presented by Apple TV+**

A Celebration of Black Storytelling: PAFF 2025 Honors Visionary Filmmakers and Groundbreaking Narratives

“Severance” Actor Tramell Tillman Honored with “Rising Star Award”

Los Angeles, CA - The **Pan African Film & Arts Festival (PAFF)**, the largest Black film festival in the United States, proudly announces the winners of its 2025 competition. This year’s festival, which ran from February 4 to February 17, showcased a dynamic lineup of films from across the African diaspora, amplifying powerful storytelling, diverse voices, and cultural narratives that redefine the cinematic landscape. The awards were handed out at **PAFF’s Filmmaker Awards Brunch presented by Apple TV+** in Culver City, CA at Palm Sophia on Mon., Feb. 17.

“Each year, PAFF continues to serve as a global stage for Black creatives, and 2025 was no exception,” said **Oduduwa Olatunji, PAFF Executive Director**. “The winning films this year not only pushed artistic boundaries but also reflected the richness and depth of Black storytelling. We are honored to celebrate these visionary filmmakers and their extraordinary work.”

The **PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch** serves as the grand finale to the festival, celebrating the best in global Black cinema. The event unveiled the winners of PAFF’s **jury and audience-selected films**, alongside the festival’s **Festival and Programmers’ Awards**, recognizing industry pioneers and emerging voices who are shaping the future of film.

2025 PAN AFRICAN FILM AND ARTS FESTIVAL  
**DREAMBEYOND**

PAFF is an **Oscars qualifying film festival** for the Academy Awards in the categories of: Best Short Narrative Film Award, Best Short Documentary Award, and Best Animated Short.

### **About the Ceremony**

The festival's awards ceremony was hosted by acclaimed actress **Essence Atkins**, adding a vibrant and engaging presence to the celebration of Black excellence in cinema.

This year's PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch was further elevated by a dynamic lineup of celebrity presenters who brought star power and charisma to the stage. **Kent Faulcon** (*For Better or Worse, Selma*), **Kiki Haynes** (*All the Queens Men*), **Malika Blessings** (*Wicked City*), and **Nadine Ellis** (*Let's Stay Together, One Kind of People*) lent their talents to honor the exceptional filmmakers whose work captivated audiences and pushed the boundaries of Black storytelling. Their presence underscored PAFF's commitment to celebrating both established and emerging voices in the industry, making the awards brunch an unforgettable tribute to cinematic excellence.

Adding to the prestige of the PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch, **Culver City Mayor Dan O'Brien**, **Vice Mayor Freddy Puza**, and **Councilmember Bubba Fish** were in attendance, underscoring the city's commitment to supporting Black art, culture, and storytelling. Their presence highlighted the vital role PAFF plays in the creative landscape of Culver City and beyond, reinforcing the festival's impact as a cultural and cinematic institution that uplifts diverse voices and fosters community engagement.

### **About the Awards**

A defining feature of the PAFF Filmmaker Awards is the prestigious ceremonial staff, designed by **renowned Ghanaian artist Allohn Agbenya**. Handcrafted from rich ebony wood sourced from Togo and adorned with stainless silver, each staff is a stunning work of art that embodies African craftsmanship and cultural heritage. Rooted in West African tradition, the presentation of a staff is a symbolic honor bestowed upon those who have achieved greatness in their field. By receiving this distinguished award, PAFF winners are not only celebrated for their artistic excellence but also inducted into a legacy of leadership and storytelling that spans generations.

**2025 PAFF Jury Award Winners**

**Best Narrative Feature:** *Nawi: Dear Future Me* (Kenya) – Directed by Vallentine Chelluget, Apuu Mourine, Kevin Schmutzler & Tobias Schmutzler

**Best Documentary Feature:** *Legacy: The De-Colonized History of South Africa* (South Africa) – Directed by Tara Moore

**Best First Feature – Narrative:** *Color Book* (US) – Directed by David Fortune

**Best Short Documentary:** *Can't Retire From This* (US)– Directed by Melanie Page

**Best Short Narrative:** *Advent* (US) – Directed by Rachael Danae Bass

**Audience Award Winners**

**Best Feature Narrative:** *Til Death...Do You* (US)– Directed by Andra Fuller

**Best Feature Documentary:** *Memories of Love Returned* (Uganda/US)– Directed by Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine

**Best Short Narrative:** *For Sale* (US)– Directed by Nika King

**Best Short Documentary:** *The Devil is Busy* (US) – Directed by Geeta Gandbhir & Christalyn Hampton

**Programmers' Award Winners**

**Short Narrative:** *Bela LX-404* (Brazil) – Directed by Luiza Botelho

**Short Documentary:** *Born in the Struggle* (US) – Directed by Kamasi Hill

**Feature Documentary:** *We Want the Funk* (US) – Directed by Stanley Nelson

**Feature Narrative:** *Young King* (US) – Directed by Bryant Griffin

**Ja'Net Dubois Festival Award**

**Short Documentary:** *The Thoughts of Our Ancestors* (Tanzania/Germany) – Directed by Kokutekeleza Musebeni

**Short Narrative:** *Run Like We* (UK) – Directed by Rhys Aaron Lewis

**Feature Documentary (Tie):** *Mount Mutombo* (UAE/US) – Directed by Dina Khreino

and

*Sountrack to a Coup d'Etat* (Belgium/France/Netherlands) – Directed by John Grimonprez

**Feature Narrative:** *The Fisherman* (Ghana) – Directed by Zoey Martinson

**Special Honors**

PAFF proudly honored “**Severance**” actor **Tramell Tillman** with the **Rising Star Award** at today’s prestigious **PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch, presented by Apple TV+**.

Recognized for his undeniable talent and magnetic on-screen presence, Tillman joins an esteemed list of past recipients who have shaped the industry with bold storytelling and authentic representation.

Presented by actress, producer, and Hollywood favorite **Yvette Nicole Brown**, the award celebrates an artist on the brink of superstardom—one whose work not only captivates but also challenges narratives and pushes boundaries. Tillman, known for his gripping performance in “**Severance**”, has continued to make waves in the industry, proving that he is a force to be reckoned with.

This year’s festival saw an incredible turnout of industry professionals, film enthusiasts, and cultural leaders, reaffirming PAFF’s role as a vital platform for Black storytelling. With over 150 films from 34 countries and in 19 languages, PAFF 2025 continued its tradition of celebrating the past, present, and future of Pan-African cinema.



PAFF, celebrating its rich legacy of amplifying Black voices in film, continues to be a premier platform for both emerging and established talent, fostering a space where stories from the African diaspora take center stage. The **PAFF Filmmaker Awards Brunch** remains one of the festival's most anticipated events, bringing together industry leaders, creators, and changemakers to celebrate Black excellence in film and television.

For more information about PAFF and its programming, visit [www.paff.org](http://www.paff.org).

### **About Pan African Film & Arts Festival:**

The Pan African Film & Arts Festival (PAFF) is one of the longest-running and most respected cultural events dedicated to showcasing the artistic achievements of the Black and African diaspora. Since its inception, PAFF has provided a dynamic platform for filmmakers, artists, and performers to share their stories, celebrate their heritage, and inspire audiences through powerful and thought-provoking works. More at [paff.org](http://paff.org).

The Pan African Film and Arts Festival is proud to be supported by an incredible lineup of sponsors who share our commitment to celebrating Black art, culture, and storytelling. This year's sponsors include Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, District 2, the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, Culver City, the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles City Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson, District 8, Los Angeles City Councilmembers Curren D. Price Jr., District 9 and Heather Hutt, District 10, and Westfield Culver City. Additional support for PAFF comes from Stocker Street Creative, Gilead Sciences, SAGindie, Sony Pictures, DGA, US Bank, BeiGene, Apple TV+, and the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI).

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Access the 2025 PAFF Pressroom [here](#).