



For Immediate Release
Thursday, February 6, 2025

Media Contact:
press@paff.org

‘Mexico Is Hell For Black Migrants’ and Other Films Use Storytelling to Highlight the Triumphs and Struggles of Black Immigrant Communities During Pan African Film & Arts Festival

Black History Month Event Celebrates the Stories of Black Immigrants Amid Nationwide Immigration Tensions

Los Angeles, CA — As immigration policies tighten and deportation rates climb, the **Pan African Film Festival (PAFF)** steps forward to provide a critical platform for the stories of **Black immigrants**, offering a bridge of understanding through the power of film and art. In a time of heightened rhetoric and divisive policies targeting immigrant communities, PAFF’s mission to amplify voices that are often overlooked has never been more urgent.

For over three decades, PAFF has celebrated the rich tapestry of Pan-African culture by showcasing films, art, and narratives from across the African diaspora. This year’s festival spotlights the experiences of Black immigrants—their triumphs, challenges, and contributions—highlighting the unique struggles they face within the broader immigration landscape. Through storytelling, PAFF seeks to dismantle stereotypes, foster empathy, and ignite dialogue about the intersections of race, migration, and resilience.

“The stories of Black immigrants are complex, nuanced, and deeply human,” said **Oduwa Olatunji, Executive Director of PAFF**. “In a time when immigration debates are reduced to numbers and statistics, we’re using film and art to remind the world of the people behind the headlines. These narratives deserve to be seen, heard, and celebrated.”

This year’s festival lineup features:

- **International film festival** – Films African and Caribbean countries.
- **Documentaries and narrative films** that explore themes of displacement, identity, and belonging.
- **Panel discussions** with filmmakers, activists, and scholars on the unique challenges faced by Black immigrant communities.

Special Screening and Panel Discussion

PAFF is proud to continue its partnership with the **Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)** by hosting a special screening of select short films entitled “**Black Immigrants: Telling Our Stories & Visioning the Future**”. The screening will be followed by a powerful discussion exploring the needs, challenges, and aspirations of Black immigrants. This event will also examine the deep connections between Black displacement, migration, and the systemic forces of racial capitalism and global anti-Blackness driving these issues. Panelists include BAJI Legal Director **Tsion Gurmo**, **Kelly Lytle Hernández**, professor of History, African American Studies, and Urban Planning and Director of the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA, **MEXICO IS HELL FOR BLACK MIGRANTS** filmmaker **Tommy Franklin**, and actor and activist **Kendrick Sampson** (“Insecure”, “How to Get Away With Murder”) The panel will be moderated by BAJI Executive Director **Nana Gyamfi**. The event will take place on Sat., Feb. 8 at the Cinemark Baldwin Hills & XD in Los Angeles. Tickets and more information can be found online at paff.org.

"BAJI is thrilled to be a PAFF sponsor again this year and to co-host this really critical screening and panel about Black immigrants at this time when racial justice and immigrant rights are under vicious attack," added **BAJI Executive Director Nana Gyamfi**. Film is a powerful storytelling medium for making true necessary connections between the lived experiences of Black migrants and Black Americans. This is a must-attend event for all who know that none of us is free until we're all free."

"It doesn't matter if it's Mexico, Italy, New York, or Tanzania, no matter where I go, leaning into my Black community and learning ways we can care for one another and appreciate our Black stories in the worst of political times is the energy I'm working with these days," said **filmmaker Tommy Franklin**. "For me, the visual medium of film is such a powerful weapon to slice through misconceptions about the Black diaspora and amplify the truths of our interconnectedness."

Highlighted Films

NAWI: DEAR FUTURE ME (Kenya)

Feature Narrative/103 min.

Director: Vallentine Chelluget, Apuu Mourine, Kevin Schmutzler & Tobias Schmutzler

Kenyan's entry for Best International Feature Film at the 97th Academy Awards

Nawi is set in the arid, isolated landscapes of Turkana, Kenya, focusing on the life of a young girl named Nawi. The film, based on true events, follows Nawi, a 13-year-old girl who is sold into marriage for livestock. Desperate to escape her fate, Nawi flees on her wedding night to pursue her dream of attending high school. Along her journey, she faces challenges from her family and community bound by traditional customs. Nawi takes a bold stand for her own life and those

2025 PAN AFRICAN FILM AND ARTS FESTIVAL
DREAMBEYOND

of other young girls at risk, embodying themes of resistance, hope, and transformation. The film emphasizes the need of access to education especially for girls in remote regions of Africa in order to fight the practice of forced child marriages.

Cast: Michelle Lemuya Ikeny, Joel Liwan, Ochungo Benson, Ben Tekee, Michelle Chebet Tiren, Patrick Oketch, Nungo Marriane Akinyi, Nyokabi Macharia, Sienna Tanayian

FINDING MUSANA (Uganda/Feature)

Documentary/95 min.

Director: Jim W. Hanon

A young Ugandan and a Colorado intern discover first-hand how charity models in Africa can create exploitation and dependence. Together with unexpected partners, they develop a model of local-ownership and micro-enterprise that could forever shift how the West views poverty relief.

LEGACY: THE DE-COLONIZED HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA (South Africa)

Feature Documentary/109 min.

Director: Tara Moore

Apartheid was dismantled in 1994, yet three decades later, South Africa still remains the most unequal country in the world. The roots of this inequality are revealed in this exploration into South Africa, exposing why they persist today. A perspective-shifting documentary that features, in unprecedented access, the grandson of the “Architect of Apartheid”, who takes a searingly honest look into his ancestry, exposing not only the systemic strings that Apartheid still holds over South Africa, but the psychological strings as well.

THE DOG (KADZO)* (Kenya)

Feature Narrative/107 min.

Director: Baker Karim

MZ is a small-time drug dealer working the frantic streets of the coastal city of Mombasa in Kenya. He is hired to drive a young escort, Kadzo, to and from her assignments, with the instruction to not, under any circumstances, get involved with her. But he falls in love the minute he lays eyes on her. When Kadzo tells MZ about her dream of running away, he decides to save her and leave Mombasa. The problem is that Kadzo doesn't really want to run away and she doesn't want to be saved.

Cast: Alexander Karim, Caroline Muthoni, Carolyn Midimo, Robert Agengo, Lorna Lemi, Benson Gaitho

THE MAN DIED (Nigeria)

2025 PAN AFRICAN FILM AND ARTS FESTIVAL
DREAMBEYOND

Feature Narrative/134 min.

Director: Awam Amkpa

Based on the harrowing prison memoir by Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, "The Man Died" is a powerful tale of resistance, courage, and the unyielding human spirit. Set against the backdrop of Nigeria's civil war, the film chronicles Soyinka's imprisonment without trial by a brutal military regime determined to silence his voice. Through solitary confinement, torture, and deprivation, Soyinka's resolve to fight against tyranny and injustice only grows stronger. Interwoven with flashbacks to his earlier life as a writer and activist, the film reveals the profound inner strength and unbreakable spirit that drive Soyinka's resistance. As he documents his experiences on scraps of paper smuggled out of his cell, his writings become a beacon of hope and a call to action for others living under oppression. "The Man Died" is not just a personal story but a universal testament to the enduring power of truth and the necessity of standing up against tyranny. It is a poignant reminder that in the face of oppression, silence is not an option, and the human spirit can never truly be extinguished.

Cast: Wale Ojo, Sam Dede

A full listing of African and Caribbean films is available online at paff.org.

PAFF continues to underscore the critical need for solidarity across communities as immigration crackdowns disproportionately impact people of African and Caribbean descent. By amplifying these stories, PAFF is not only fostering awareness but also celebrating the resilience and cultural contributions of Black immigrants.

The 2025 Pan African Film Festival runs from February 4-17 in Los Angeles, CA. For tickets, schedules, and more information, visit paff.org.

Join us as we celebrate the voices that refuse to be silenced and the art that brings us together.

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, and the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI).

About Pan African Film & Arts Festival:

2025 PAN AFRICAN FILM AND ARTS FESTIVAL
DREAMBEYOND

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.

###

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

Access 2025 film assets, including photos and videos [here](#).

Submit for 2025 PAFF press credentials [here](#).