

# THE 34th ANNUAL PAN AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL **PAFF SOUL 2026**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

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## **THE 34TH ANNUAL PAN AFRICAN FILM & ARTS FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2026 AWARD WINNERS**

### **Visionary Filmmakers from Across the African Diaspora Honored for Bold Storytelling and Artistic Excellence**

**LOS ANGELES** — The 34th Annual Pan African Film & Arts Festival (**PAFF**) proudly announces the award winners of its 2026 festival, recognizing visionary filmmakers, bold storytellers, fearless artists, and creative disruptors whose work moved audiences, sparked dialogue, and elevated the global Black experience.

Each year, PAFF honors projects that reflect the depth, complexity, and brilliance of the African diaspora. From powerful narratives and groundbreaking documentaries to innovative shorts and emerging voices, this year's award recipients represent the very best in cinematic and artistic achievement from around the world.

These winners didn't just tell stories.

They shifted perspective.

They challenged convention.

They left a mark.

“What we witnessed this year was proof that Black storytelling continues to innovate, disrupt, and redefine cinema,” said **Oduduwa, Executive Director of the Pan African Film & Arts Festival**. “These filmmakers are pushing boundaries while honoring history. PAFF is more than a festival — it is an ecosystem. We champion these artists from premiere to potential distribution, and as an Academy Awards® qualifying festival, we are proud to help open doors that have historically been closed to our community.”

Beyond celebration, PAFF continues to serve as a critical launchpad for Black filmmakers seeking distribution, industry visibility, and long-term career sustainability. Film festivals like PAFF play an essential role in connecting bold, independent Black storytelling to buyers, platforms, and global audiences — helping ensure these stories live far beyond the festival screen.

PAFF is also an **Academy Awards® qualifying festival** in the categories of:

- **Best Short Narrative Film Award**
- **Best Short Documentary Award**
- **Best Animated Short**

Winners in these categories become eligible for consideration by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, further elevating the global reach and industry impact of the filmmakers honored at PAFF.

From the UK to Gabon, Brazil to Ghana, and across the United States, this year's honorees underscore PAFF's enduring role as a global platform for Black creativity and storytelling. The festival continues to champion stories that expand the narrative, preserve cultural memory, and imagine liberated futures — while actively creating pathways to distribution, industry access, and Academy recognition.

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## **JURY AWARDS**

### **Best Animated Short**

*Two Black Boys in Paradise* (UK)

Directed by Baz Sells

### **Best Feature Documentary**

*Black is Beautiful: The Kwame Brathwaite Story* (UK, US)

Directed by Yemi Bamiro

### **Best First Feature Documentary**

*Play It Loud! How Toronto Got Soul* (Canada, Jamaica, US)

Directed by Graeme Mathieson

**Best First Feature Narrative**

*Montmartre* (France, US)

Directed by Leon Hendrix III

**Best Feature Narrative**

*Billie* (Germany)

Directed by Sheri Hagen

**Best Short Narrative**

*The Black Bart of Taco King #17* (US)

Directed by Rickey Larke

**Best Short Documentary**

*Exodus* (Panama, US)

Directed by Nimco Sheikhaden

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**AUDIENCE FAVORITE AWARDS**

**Audience Award – Feature Documentary**

*A Better Way: James Lawson, Architect of Nonviolence* (US)

Directed by Karen Hayes

**Audience Award – Feature Narrative**

*Montmartre* (France, US)

Directed by Leon Hendrix III

**Audience Award – Short Narrative**

*Spilled Milk* (US)

Directed by Jared Leaf

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**PROGRAMMERS' AWARDS**

**Programmers' Award – Short Documentary**

*The Price of Resistance: Sala Udin, An American Agitator* (US)

Directed by Annette Banks & Ty Cooper

**Programmers' Award – Feature Documentary**

*Amazing Grace: YorubaWorlds* (Brazil, Nigeria)

Directed by Raynald Leconte

**Programmers' Award – Short Narrative**

*Legally Black* (US)

Directed by Abai Peace

**Programmers' Award – Feature Narrative**

*Radio Sky* (US)

Directed by Carlitos Do Souto

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**JA'NET DUBOIS FOUNDER'S AWARDS**

Named in honor of PAFF co-founder Ja'Net DuBois, these awards recognize works that embody artistic excellence, cultural impact, and a fearless commitment to truth.

**Ja'Net DuBois Founders Award – Short Documentary**

*When the Sky Turned Orange* (US)

Directed by B.P. Edwards

**Ja'Net DuBois Founders Award – Feature Documentary**

*Trespass* (US)

Directed by Kim Watson

**Ja'Net DuBois Founders Award – Short Narrative**

*Complicated Grief* (Ghana, Switzerland)

Directed by Julius Amedume

**Ja'Net DuBois Founders Award – Feature Narrative**

*Muganga, The One Who Treats* (Gabon)

Directed by Marie-Hélène Roux

For more information about PAFF and the 2026 award-winning films, visit

[www.paff.org](http://www.paff.org).

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

The Pan African Film & Arts Festival (PAFF) is the nation's largest and longest-running Black film festival, dedicated to the promotion of cultural understanding and racial tolerance through the exhibition of film, art, and creative expression from the global African diaspora. For more information, visit [paff.org](http://paff.org).