

Kansas City  
PBS

FEM THE  
FUTURE

# REEL BLACK FILM FEST

February 20th - 21st  
2026



## Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Reel Black Film Fest

We are excited to honor the vibrant culture, history and creativity of the Black Midwest through the power of film.

Hosted in Kansas City's Historic 18<sup>th</sup> & Vine District, the 2026 program invites audiences to experience intimate character journeys that reflect and celebrate the enduring legacies of Black life.

This year's festival features nonfiction shorts and features, conversations, an opening and closing reception, a Black-owned marketplace, filmmaker lounge and the announcement of four awards.

### 2026 Sponsors and Partners



**BACKSTAGE**

**ANDSCAPE**



**Get Your  
Film Fest Tee**

[kansascitypbs.org/  
reelblacktee2026](http://kansascitypbs.org/reelblacktee2026)



**DAY 1**  
**Friday,**  
**Feb. 20, 2026**

**VIP Opening Reception**

4-5 p.m. | Gem Theater

**Black-owned Marketplace**

5-8 p.m. | Gem Theater Lobby

**Aunt Sister: The Legacy of Sarah Rector**

(Premiere & Conversation)

6-7:30 p.m. | Gem Theater

**Reel Black on Tap**

(Networking Mixer)

8-10 p.m. | Vine Street Brewing Co.

**DAY 2**  
**Saturday,**  
**Feb. 21, 2026**

**Black-Owned Marketplace**

10 a.m.-7 p.m. | Gem Theater Lobby

**Official Selection Screenings**

11:15 a.m.-2:15 p.m. | Gem Theater

**30-Minute Intermission**

2:15-2:45 p.m.

**Local Pulse, National Impact:  
Building Creative Pipelines**

(Conversation)

2:45-3:30 p.m. | Gem Theater

**Hoops, Hopes & Dreams**

(Special Screening)

3:35-4 p.m. | Gem Theater

**Special Performance Oscar Dupree**

(Live Music)

4-4:30 p.m. | Gem Theater Lobby

**The Heroic True-Life Adventure  
of Alvin Brooks**

(Special Screening & Conversation)

4:35-6:45 p.m. | Gem Theater

**Closing Reception & Awards Ceremony**

7-10 p.m. | American Jazz Museum





*Aunt Sister: The Legacy of Sarah Rector*, from filmmaker Jacob Handy, chronicles the captivating story of an 11-year-old Black girl from Oklahoma who transformed into one of history's wealthiest Black figures. The film follows her extraordinary journey from the unexpected oil boom on her family's land

to her rise to prominence in Kansas City. Through stunning reenactments and intimate conversations with historians and family, this documentary delves into her resilience, philanthropy and enduring legacy.

**PREMIERING THURSDAY, FEB. 26, AT 7 P.M.**  
**ON THE PBS APP AND KANSAS CITY PBS**  
**YOUTUBE CHANNEL.**



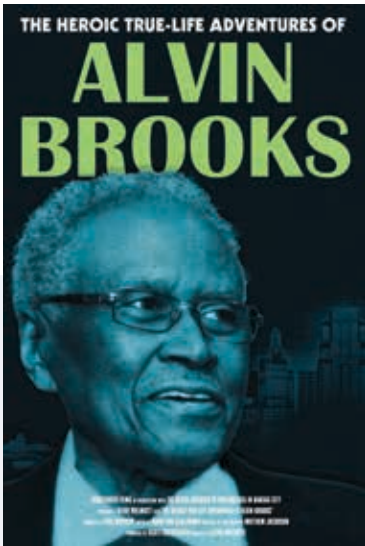
### **MEET THE FILMMAKER JACOB HANDY**

Jacob Handy is a Kansas native, hailing from Wyandotte County. He pursued his undergraduate degree at Kansas State University and continued his academic journey at Langston University for graduate school. Handy's diverse career path includes roles as a collegiate football coach, high school educator and nonprofit management professional. He has a passion for storytelling and has been involved in various media projects since his college days, particularly excelling in writing, producing and directing music videos for top artists in the industry. His work as a Mid-America Regional EMMY® Award-winning storyteller for *The Potato King* and *Heart of the City* showcases his talent and dedication to impactful narratives. Beyond his professional endeavors, Handy finds fulfillment in family life as a devoted husband to Michaela and a loving father to his four incredible children: Nahla, Noah, Nasira and Naheem. His purpose is to leave the world a better place than he found it.



# The Heroic True-Life Adventures of Alvin Brooks

*The Heroic True-Life Adventures of Alvin Brooks* is a portrait of the Kansas City civil rights leader whose six decades of service, from breaking barriers as one of the city's first Black police officers to becoming its first Black department head and founding the AdHoc Group Against Crime, trace the extraordinary journey of a man who rose from early hardship and racial injustice to become one of the region's most influential voices for safety, equity and community.

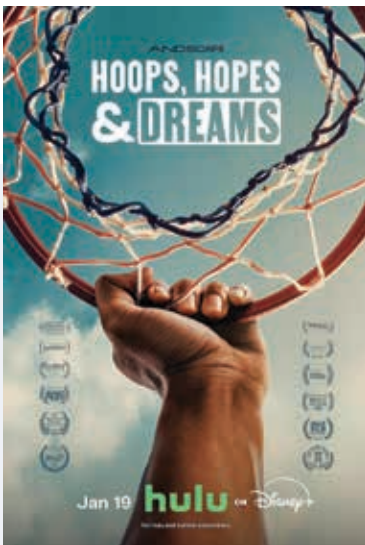


## MEET THE FILMMAKER KEVIN WILLMOTT

Kevin Willmott is an Academy Award®- and BAFTA-winning screenwriter, director and professor whose films boldly confront race, history and social justice. He earned both honors for co-writing *BlackKkKlansman* with Spike Lee, following their earlier collaboration on the acclaimed feature *Chi-Raq*.

Willmott's work spans acclaimed features such as *Ninth Street*, *CSA: Confederate States of America*, *The Battle for Bunker Hill*, *The Only Good Indian*, *Jayhawkers*, and *Destination Planet Negro!*.

# Hoops, Hopes & Dreams



*Hoops, Hopes & Dreams* uncovers the untold story of how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a team of civil rights activists utilized basketball courts to engage young voters.



## MEET THE FILMMAKERS GLENN KAINO

Glenn Kaino's works, often functioning as poetic contradictions, aim to reconcile conflicting ideologies, opposing systems, and strict dichotomies in material and experiential ways. His studio practice includes sculpture, painting, filmmaking, performance, installation, and large-scale public work. Kaino is also an Emmy®- and Webby award-winning producer and documentarian, whose films have been featured at the Tribeca Film Festival and SXSW.



## ALEXYS FEASTER

Alexys Feaster is a visionary strategist and creative force with 20 years of experience shaping the holistic development and growth of athletes, influential leaders and organizations. Feaster created and hosted the conversation series "Where Do We Go From Here?" as an outlet for players to discuss collective change. Feaster was the mastermind behind the storied engagement strategy for President Obama's reelection campaign, creating collectives like DJs for Obama with D-Nice; and various political and social good digital campaigns like Alicia Keys' "We Are a Powerful Force," the NFL's "Gotta Vote," and Jay-Z's "The Power of Our Voice."



## FEATURES



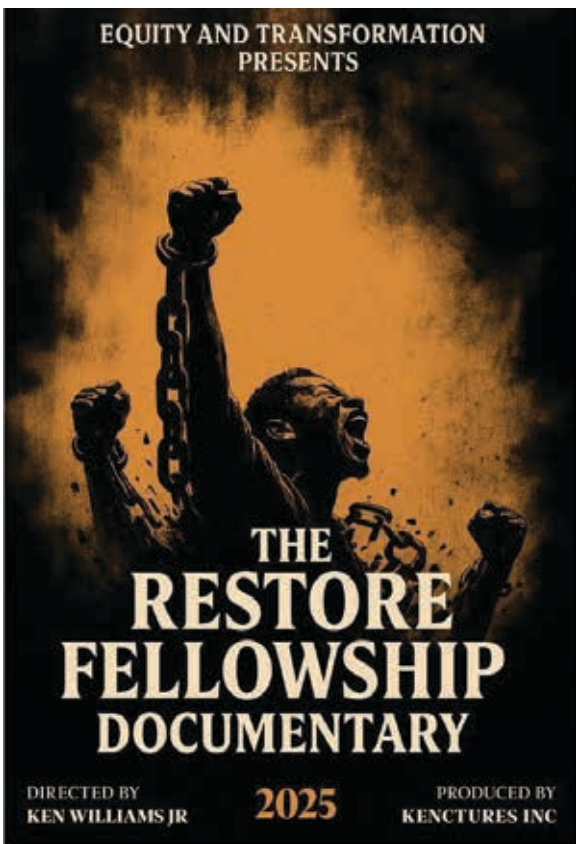
### Her Fight, His Name: The Story of Gwen Carr and Eric Garner

Filmed over six years, *Her Fight, His Name: The Story of Gwen Carr and Eric Garner* follows Gwen Carr as she seeks justice for her son, marking the 10th anniversary of his death.



Brad Bailey

Filmmaker Brad Bailey is the first African American to win Student Oscar Gold in Documentary. His film *Her Fight, His Name* won three New York Emmys, the Duke Human Rights Storytelling Award, and second place at Woodstock Film Festival.



### The Restore Fellowship Documentary

*The Restore Fellowship Documentary* follows five system-impacted individuals from Chicago on a transformative journey to Benin, West Africa.



Ken Williams

Filmmaker Ken Williams is a self-taught documentarian and cinematographer whose distinctive visual style emerges from his deeply rooted belief that every moment carries its own unique narrative. Born in Santa Monica, California, and raised in Matteson, Illinois, Williams brings a refreshing authenticity to his work, shaped by his diverse professional background and lifelong passion for storytelling through visual media.

## SHORTS



4

4 is an experimental short film observing an African American family over the Fourth of July weekend, capturing moments of intimacy and reflection.

Filmmaker Israel Lucius Barnes is a 25-year-old writer, director, and producer from Wichita, Kansas. His work includes HERMANO (WE) and WE USE OUR HANDS TO FIGHT. ILB creates smooth, spiritual films that entertain and stir hearts.



Israel Lucius Barnes



### Everything is Everything

*Everything Is Everything* is a conversational documentary exploring the heartfelt commemorations of Juneteenth by Chicago natives during the summer of 2024.

Filmmaker Kin Marie is a Chicago-based artist native to the South Side of Chicago. Their current practice centers on the visual culture of Black and queer identities, exploring these experiences through both everyday and interpretive lenses. Named Chicago's Best Filmmaker of 2023 by the Chicago Reader, Marie employs visual media as a tool for critical research and experimentation, probing the intersections of art, mediation, and social space.



Kin Marie

## SHORTS



### Be Home Before the Streetlights

In *Be Home Before the Streetlights*, artist Gee Horton embarks on a visually symbolic journey to reconcile with his father and trace a path of generational healing.



Gee Horton

Filmmaker Gee Horton is a Cincinnati-based multidisciplinary artist exploring memory and generational healing. His work is held in public collections including the Cincinnati Art Museum and has been featured on HBO and Amazon Prime. He is an Emmy Award winner, with a forthcoming solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati) scheduled for 2026.

### For Those That Lived There

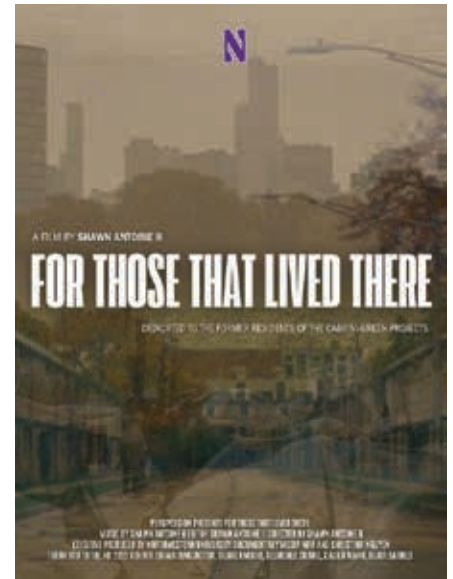


Shawn  
Antoine II

Set within the gentrified remains of Chicago's Cabrini-Green, *For Those That Lived There* traces displaced Black legacies and emerging migrant narratives.

Filmmaker Shawn Antoine II is a Harlem-born documentarian and MFA graduate of Northwestern University. His work centers Black histories, community memory, and

place-based storytelling, with screenings at festivals across the United States.



### O

*O* follows a group of men confronting oppression, exposing how silence, restraint and power shape identity.

Filmmaker Ace Lovelace is a Kansas City-based interdisciplinary producer whose work blends myth, symbolism, and social inquiry to explore oppression, embodiment, and collective liberation.



Ace Lovelace





## Something in the Water

*Something in the Water* features five water justice advocates as they discuss how Milwaukee's Black communities are disproportionately affected by lead poisoning and the path toward equitable change.

Filmmaker Nateya Taylor is a multimedia storyteller based in Milwaukee, WI. As a strong advocate for health equity and Black liberation, she intersects written and visual storytelling to interrogate the anti-blackness that is endemic in our social structures and the internalized anti blackness that accompanies it. Instead, she reveals the multifacetedness of Blackness through her work.



Nateya Taylor

## We Use Our Hands to Fight

*We Use Our Hands to Fight* is a cinematic exploration that redefines fighting as a spiritual act, using internal gifts to confront unseen battles.



Israel Lucius Barnes

Filmmaker Israel Lucius Barnes is a 25-year-old writer, director, and producer from Wichita, Kansas. His work includes *Hermano (We)* and *We Use Our Hands to Fight*. ILB creates smooth, spiritual films that entertain and stir hearts.



## 2026 REEL BLACK FILM FEST JURY

Dennis Powell | Executive Director, The Soul of Santa "Do Good" Foundation

Iman Powell | Operations, The Soul of Santa "Do Good" Foundation

Jaclyn Berry | Production Manager, Kansas City PBS

Jamie Addison | Founder, Buckwheat Productions

Kynala Phillips | Editor, Milwaukee Neighborhood Reporting Initiative

Latavia Young | Communications & Engagement Manager, Kansas City PBS

Lex Nicole | Program Manager, Fem the Future

Makayla Henderson | Event Operations Specialist, Kansas City PBS

Sandy Woodson | Documentarian

Steph Shannon | Director of Major Giving, Kansas City PBS

Tori Foushee | Senior Content & Web Manager, Radial Entertainment

Anonymous | Filmmaker





KANSAS CITY PBS PRESENTS

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