



TEN FILMS SELECTED FOR INAUGURAL HBCU WEEK NOW STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL

Original short films spanning multiple genres will begin streaming January 27

BALTIMORE (January 20, 2026) — Ten award-winning films by students and recent graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) will premiere on January 27 as part of the inaugural **HBCU Week NOW Student Film Festival**.

The winning shorts will stream on the [HBCU Week NOW YouTube channel](#). They were selected from a pool of 36 submissions from across the nation. Each winning project receives a \$5,000 award and inclusion in the festival produced by **HBCU Week NOW**, a public media partnership spearheaded by **Maryland Public Television (MPT)**, and **Black Public Media (BPM)**, the Harlem-based national media arts nonprofit.

The winning films run the gamut of genres, from documentary and experimental to animation and sci-fi. They were directed by students and recent graduates of Hampton University, Howard University and Spelman College. The shorts are:

- *For Me, By Me* by Hannah Koonce (Spelman College '28);
- *From Rodeo to Polo: The First HBCU Polo Team* by Kendi King (Spelman College '25);
- *The Hale Academy* by Audra Davison (Spelman College '22);
- *Lady T* by Nia Lambert (Spelman College '25);
- *One and Only* by Zachary Ramseur (Hampton University '28);
- *Paralysis by Analysis* by Jolene Carter (Howard University '25);
- *Shotgun* by Quaran Ahmad (Howard University '25);
- *StarChild* by Miya Scaggs (Spelman College '25);
- *What Is The Black Body?* by Amira Barrett (Spelman College '25); and
- *Whispers of White* by Kennedy Rome (Spelman College '26).

The festival slate includes true stories of the first HBCU polo and lacrosse teams, fictional stories about environmental justice and the dangers of AI, explorations of femininity and the Black body, and more.

Black Public Media issued an open call for submissions in the spring of 2025. Eligible applicants were current HBCU students and recent graduates (within the last three years). Enrollment in a film or media program was not required.

“HBCU Week NOW honors the enduring history, legacy and cultural heritage of HBCUs. Our new film festival gives emerging filmmakers from these institutions a national stage and the momentum to turn student work into the next wave of public media,” said Travis E. Mitchell, MPT senior vice president and chief content officer.

“These films prove the pipeline is strong for Black stories of our past, present and future,” said Leslie Fields-Cruz, BPM executive director. “From intimate docs to audacious sci-fi projects, these artists are prepared to lead the next wave of storytelling.”

HBCU Week NOW is a public media partnership comprised of Maryland Public Television, PBS North Carolina, South Carolina Educational Television, WXXI Rochester, Louisiana Public Broadcasting, WABE Atlanta, Howard University Television, and WORLD, a leading public media digital channel.

Beyond launching the student film festival — a cornerstone initiative celebrating HBCU culture through authentic storytelling — HBCU Week NOW is amplifying its reach during Black History Month in February. The acclaimed MPT documentary *Becoming Thurgood: America's Social Architect* returns to PBS stations nationwide (check local listings), while two new compelling short films, *Bayou Magic: The Alvin Jazz Institute* from Louisiana Public Broadcasting and *Wall of Sound* by Alabama Public Broadcasting, will premiere on the [HBCU Week NOW YouTube channel](#), extending HBCU Week NOW's mission to honor Black excellence across multiple platforms and audiences.

ABOUT HBCU WEEK NOW

HBCU Week NOW creates and distributes multi-platform digital content for a global audience about the students, alumni, leaders, and innovative programs of the nation's HBCUs. Partnering PBS stations are collaborating to produce a collection of original long-form and short films, live events, and other HBCU-themed programming. HBCU Week NOW is made possible by support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and is sponsored by Morgan State University. Subscribe to @HBCUWeekNOW on YouTube and follow @HBCUWeekNOW on Instagram. Visit hbcuweeknow.com for more information.

ABOUT BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA (BPM)

BPM supports the development of visionary content creators and distributes stories about the global Black experience to inspire a more equitable and inclusive future. For nearly 50 years, BPM has addressed the needs of unserved and underserved audiences. BPM-supported programs have won five Emmys®, 10 Peabodys, five Anthem Awards, 14 Emmy® nominations and an Oscar® nomination. BPM continues to address historical, contemporary, and systemic challenges that traditionally impede the development and distribution of Black stories.

ABOUT MARYLAND PUBLIC TELEVISION

Maryland Public Television (MPT) is a statewide, public-supported TV network and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) affiliate, offering entertaining, informative, educational, and inspiring content delivered by traditional broadcasting and streaming on TVs, computers, and mobile devices. A state agency, it operates under the auspices of the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission. MPT creates and distributes local, regional, and national content and is a frequent winner of regional Emmy® Awards. MPT's commitment to educators, parents, caregivers, and learners of all ages is delivered through instructional events and Thinkport.org. MPT's year-round community engagement activities connect viewers with resources on a wide range of topics. For more information visit mpt.org.

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