

3rd Annual HBCU First LOOK Film Festival Returns Nov. 6 – 8 Celebrates Lynn Whitfield, Marsai Martin & Ryan Coogler

The HBCU First LOOK Film Festival will officially kick off at the legendary Howard Theater with the Salute THEM Awards

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The 2025 [HBCU First LOOK Film Festival](#) (HBCUFLF) returns to Howard University in Washington, DC Nov. 6 – 8, featuring cultural dialogues, exclusive screenings and interactive workshops with leading industry professionals. Award-winning actress and executive producer Marsai Martin serves as this year's HBCUFLF Creative Ambassador, amplifying the festival theme: "Elevate Future Storytellers."



The HBCU First LOOK Film Festival will officially kick off at the legendary Howard Theater, where Martin and the seminal award-winning actress Lynn Whitfield will be honored at Cafe Mocha Radio's 15th Anniversary [Salute THEM Awards](#). Acclaimed writer, director and producer Ryan Coogler will receive the inaugural HBCU First LOOK "I Aspire" Global Impact Award presented in partnership with Howard University's Chadwick Boseman College of Fine Arts. This presentation holds profound significance for the Howard University community, as it celebrates not only Coogler's groundbreaking contributions to global cinema but also honors his powerful creative partnership with the esteemed late Chadwick Boseman, an alumnus of Howard University. Coogler and Boseman's contributions to Black Panther set new industry standards for representation, while also becoming an emblem of cultural pride, ambition, and artistic excellence. This aligns perfectly with the HBCU First LOOK Festival's commitment to "Elevate Future Storytellers."

Additional honorees include Ben's Chili Bowl co-founder Virginia Ali, Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett (D-Texas), AARP EVP/Chief Diversity Officer Edna Kane Williams, philanthropist Angel Gregorio and award nominated R&B star Kenny Lattimore.

Now in its third year, the HBCUFLF offers a unique blend of 'fireside chats' and panel discussions

with diverse perspectives in filmmaking, production, storytelling, acting, talent representation, AI/digital media and distribution, etc. Participating HBCU 'alumni and allies' include award-winning actress Lynn Whitfield; "P. Valley" star J. Alphonse Nicholson, "Chicago P.D." actor LaRoyce Hawkins, supervising producer of Peacock's "Bel-Air" Felicia Pride; "The Penguin" and "Fight Night" writer Shaye Ogbonna; M88 talent manager Oronde Garrett (Taraji Henson, Marsai Martin); film producers Phil Thornton ("Unexpected Christmas," "Luther: Never Too Much") and Datari Turner, Foxxhole Productions and MegaMind Media founder and film producer Tressa Smallwood.

For tickets and the latest on all HBCU First LOOK Film Festival speakers, and festival schedule download the HBCUFirstLOOK App and visit www.hbcufirstlook.com.

Past sponsors and media partners include iHeartMedia, ESPN, Black Information Network, HBCYOU, Andscape, ESPN, TVOne, CLEO TV, Paramount, HBCUGO.TV, Howard University Television + Film, Howard University Television (WHUT), Howard University Radio Network, SiriusXM Channel 141 & 142, Howard University's Chadwick Boseman College of Fine Arts and the Cafe Mocha Radio Network.

Follow on all social platforms through @HBCUfirstlook and the hashtags #hbcufirstlook #elevatefilmmakers and #elevatestorytellers #IAspire25 #hbcuculture #saluteTHEM #Blackfilm #hbcumatters

About HBCU First LOOK Film Festival

The HBCU First LOOK Film Festival was founded by Howard University alumna Sheila Eldridge who produces the annual conference through her award-winning Miles Ahead Entertainment and Broadcasting imprint. Now in its third year, the Festival champions a new generation of storytellers in the film, television, broadcast and streaming industries by providing HBCU students the platform to gain practical skills, improve their craft and showcase their work, building a pipeline that can connect both executives and students in the celebration of HBCU culture.

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