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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Five Films & Performances, Four Filmmakers, & One Day to Celebrate the Diversity of Black Film

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Kelly Strayhorn Theater is proud to present the **BlackStar Film Festival - Pittsburgh Edition** on Saturday, May 10 from 1 p.m. to 11 p.m. at Kelly Strayhorn Theater in East Liberty. KST shares films from the festival, an outlet for often-overlooked cinema by directors, writers, and producers working in documentary, experimental, and music video filmmaking.

Highlights of the daylong festival include a performance, short and feature films, a marketplace by Ujamaa Collective, and music by guest DJ Nate Da Phat Barber in the KST lobby.

Originating in Philadelphia, the BlackStar Film Festival illuminates the global black experience through films by and about people of African descent from across the world. The festival is a two-year recipient of the competitive Knight Arts Challenge Grant.

This is the first time the film festival is branching out to another city. In past years, the festival's lineup featured two world premieres, including *Soul Food Junkies* by Byron Hurt, a panel discussion with Spike Lee, and 2011's *Yelling to the Sky*, with Zoe Kravitz and Gabourey Sidibe.

Maori Holmes is the founder and artistic director of BlackStar, in addition to being a critically-acclaimed film director, producer, writer, and teacher. Holmes started the festival to expose works by independent filmmakers of African descent that otherwise may not be screened at mainstream film festivals.

A symbol for black economic independence, the festival's name originates from the Black Star Line, a shipping line created by Jamaican political leader Marcus Garvey to facilitate the transporting of goods throughout the global African community.

Festival activities begin with a panel discussion at 1 p.m. and continue with a dramatic reading and film screenings. Holmes moderates a 20-minute Q&A with the filmmaker following each screening and the reading. Filmmakers Radha Blank, Sosena Solomon, Charles Murray, and Jason Orr will participate.

"BlackStar Film Festival is an important forum for black filmmakers and their stories," says Janera Solomon, executive director of KST. "The diversity of films and stories reflecting the Diaspora is exciting."





RADHA BLANK



MERKATO



BONESHAKER



SWEET, SWEET COUNTRY



THINGS NEVER SAID

CONTACT KST FOR PRESS PHOTOS

## Festival Schedule | May 10, 1 PM – 11 PM

All Day	<b>Ujamaa Collective Marketplace</b>
1–2:30 PM	<b>"Black Film Now" Panel Discussion</b>
2:45–3:45 PM	<b>FOH Dramatic Reading</b> + Q&A w/ Radha Blank
4–5:30 PM	<b>African Short Films</b> + Q&A w/ Sosena Solomon
5:45–7:45 PM	<b>Things Never Said</b> + Q&A w/ Charles Murray
8–11 PM	<b>Diary of a Decade</b> + Q&A w/ Jason Orr

### "Black Film Now" Panel Discussion

"Black Film Now" explores the state of black independent film, looking at industry and representation. The panel will be moderated by Janera Solomon, executive director of KST.

### Dramatic Reading

#### **FOH** (2013)

» Writer: Radha Blank | Dramatic Reading :: USA

A woman faces her biggest challenge yet: to find the ultimate pleasure before saying goodbye.

*This performance contains explicit language and may not be suitable for children.*

### African Short Films

*Highlighting the international flair of the festival, these shorts are directed by female filmmakers from throughout the Diaspora living in different parts of the United States.*

#### **Merkato** (2013)

» Director: Sosena Solomon | Documentary Short Film :: Ethiopia, USA. 19 min.

Merkato takes a personal journey through one of the largest & oldest open-air markets in Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia). From the perspective of five personal stories a reflection emerges of a fascinating place that is a true microcosm of the human condition. The culture and way of life for many of Merkato's merchants is under threat by modern development.

#### **Boneshaker** (2013)

» Director/Writer: Frances Bodomo | Short Film :: Ghana, USA. 12 min.

An African family, lost in America, travels to a Louisiana church to find a cure for its problem child.

#### **Sweet, Sweet Country** (2013)

» Director/Writer: Dehanza Rogers | Short Film :: USA. 18 min.

A 20 year-old refugee, Ndizeye lives in a small Southern town struggling to support not only herself, but the family she left behind in a Kenyan refugee camp. Her struggle becomes so much more when her family literally shows up at her doorstep.

### Feature Films

#### **Things Never Said** (2013)

» Director/Writer: Charles Murray | Film :: USA. 112 min.

Kalinda Stepney (Shanola Hampton) is an aspiring poetess, but inside she's an artist who's lost. Haunted by dreams deferred and a dangerous marriage, this Los Angelean yearns to perform on New York's most acclaimed spoken word stage.

#### **Diary of a Decade** (2012)

» Director/Writer: Jason Orr | Film :: USA. 143 min.

Spanning the late 1980's through to the early 2000's, Diary of a Decade goes deep into the fabric of soul music, its definitions, pioneers, offspring, movements, and the challenges with the "mainstream" industry, as well as the evolution of the FunkJazz Kafé Arts & Music Festival. Special appearances include Jamie Foxx, Erykah Badu, Andre 3000, and Janelle Monae.



### **About the Kelly Strayhorn Theater**

As the last of nine theaters from the 1950s heyday of East Liberty, the Kelly Strayhorn Theater uses the arts as a catalyst for continuing community revitalization. The theater, in its 12th season, continues to play a key role in the transformation of Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood. An intimate, professional equipped, 349-seat multiple-use performance venue, the theater demonstrates its commitment to Pittsburgh artists and audiences. The KST is a favorite venue of emerging local artists, regional artists and arts organizations who take risks and present new work. Noted Pittsburghers Gene Kelly and Billy Strayhorn, the namesakes, are among the 80 area artists honored on the theater's Gallery of Stars. The building, opening in 1914, is the former Regent Theatre, which served the East End as a movie house for eight decades.

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