



## 3rd Annual Black American Film Festival 2024

### **Sankofa Stories: You've got to know where you've been to know where you're going.**

This festival is hosted by Dr. Erin Watley, Associate Professor of Communication & Cinema at McDaniel College.

#### **American Fiction**

2023; R; 1h 57m for language throughout, some drug use, sexual references and brief violence.

Thursday, October 3

A novelist who is fed up with the establishment profiting from Black entertainment uses a pen name to write a book that propels him into the heart of the hypocrisy and madness he claims to disdain.

*A reflection note:*

*We DO impact the media we DON'T consume. Less than 6% of books published in the United States are from Black authors in 2023. American Fiction (2024 Oscar Winner for Best Adapted Screenplay) gives a glimpse of the tension put on Black authors to craft stories that are marketable to broad audiences.*

- Percival Everett (author of *Erasure*, the book that was adapted into *American Fiction*) speaks about using race and provocative language in the creation of his art. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0s4FRf1QSI>
- Listen as author Toni Morrison gives some brief comments about writing Black stories under the "white gaze" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLlponRwez4>
- Listen to this podcast episode "What Makes a Good Race Joke?" where comedians of color grapple with race and humor: <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2022/08/22/1118915672/maz-jobrani-aparna-nancherla-brian-bahe-race-jokes>

Discussion Questions:

- What is one of your favorite stories (film, TV, book, music) that does not reflect your own identity/belief/experience? What do you enjoy most about it?
- What adjustments do you make when trying to understand a story where your identities are not at the center? or How do you interpret story elements (experiences, language, beliefs) that are much different than what you recognize?
- Author, Cole Arthur Riley warns us to "Be careful of allies who are more interested in 'learning' about Black pain than giving up the status and wealth that flow from the wound. True solidarity costs something." How does this statement resonate with you? Why?

## **Kokomo City**

2023; 1 h 13 m; R for strong sexual content, graphic nudity, language throughout, and drug use.

Thursday, October 10

A raw depiction of the lives of four black trans sex workers as they confront the dichotomy between the black community and themselves.

*A reflection note:*

*Support art that might not center stories that you are familiar with. Kokomo City is about survival, institutional failures, personal triumphs, searching for love and community. It just so happens that these themes are explored through the lens of Black transgender sex workers whose experiences may be more connected to yours than you imagine.*

- D. Smith is the director of *Kokomo City*, and in this clip she highlights the humanity of the topic and individuals in her film. <https://www.npr.org/2023/07/30/1190970520/d-smith-on-her-new-documentary-kokomo-city>
- Alok, a trans activist and author, has a powerful and insightful conversation on the “Man Enough” podcast about the urgent need for us all to practice more compassion around our understanding of gender. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tq3C9R8HNUQ>
- Black Queer history is everyone's history. Listen to educators Channing Gerard Joseph (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YT3feUhR44>) and Erick Lewis (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLaksdOOd1Q>) explain the inextricable connection between Black and Queer liberation.

Discussion Questions:

- How do you experience society (relationships/identity/gender) and systems (work/housing/security) differently than the individuals in the film? & How do your own experiences influence your ideas of how life works?
- What message from the film would you want to share with someone who is close to you? Will you?
- How can you bring more compassion towards Black Queer experiences into your community?

## **Black Ice**

2022; 1 h 36 m; R for language including racial slurs.

Thursday, October 17

*Black Ice* exposes a history of racism in hockey through the untold stories of Black hockey players, both past and present, in a predominantly white sport.

Directed by Academy Award®- and Emmy-nominated filmmaker Hubert Davis, *Black Ice* masterfully navigates the challenges, triumphs, and unique experiences faced by these athletes through poignant firsthand accounts from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) hockey players past, including Willie O'Ree, the first Black player in the National Hockey League, and former professional hockey player Akim Aliu, with the stories of present stars, including P.K. Subban and Wayne Simmonds. The film explores the deep BIPOC roots of the game, dating back to 1865 and the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes (CHL), the first all-pro league,

which not only introduced the slapshot but shaped the game of hockey we know today. Davis exposes racist patterns that span generations, even highlighting stories of how sports institutions have exerted pressure on players seeking change to remain silent.

*A reflection note:*

*Did you know that hockey has been a Black sport since the 1800's? Black Ice explores the influence that Black people have always had on the sport and the damage caused in the present when that legacy isn't acknowledged.*

- A timeline of Black hockey history from the NHL Player's Association - <https://www.nhlpa.com/news/1-22010/black-hockey-history-a-timeline>
- The Florida Panthers Asst. GM Brett Peterson in conversation with Anson Carter (former NHL player) discuss being Black in the world of hockey and how to keep shifting the culture moving forward. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W4h4fSm0n8>
- Just a modern Black family (Glenn & Yvette Henry) supporting their two sons playing hockey - <https://www.instagram.com/p/DAAtpmKR1g/>
- As a Black figure skater, Elladj Blade built his career on a different type of ice. But here he speaks to similar experiences and the role that culture and sport plays in his activism. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_EQ7FC9e5V8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_EQ7FC9e5V8)

Discussion Questions:

- What is your favorite sport? What have you learned about culture from following the game/players/teams?
- Have you even participated in an event where at first you felt like you "didn't belong?" What needed to happen for you to feel welcomed?
- Did you already know about the historic contributions that Black people made to the sport of hockey? How do you feel about that?

## **Wakanda Forever**

Thursday, October 24

2022; 2 h 41 m; PG-13 for sequences of strong violence, action and some language.

Queen Ramonda, Shuri, M'Baku, Okoye and the Dora Milaje fight to protect the kingdom of Wakanda from intervening world powers in the wake of King T'Challa's death. As the Wakandans strive to embrace their next chapter, the heroes must band together with the help of War Dog Nakia and Everett Ross and forge a new path for their nation.

*A reflection note:*

*The sequel to Black Panther is known for its action and adventure in connection to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Come and watch it again for lessons on navigating grief, starting over, and cross-cultural world building. This film has something for everyone in your family or community group.*

- Take a look at the creators and cast of the film discussing the cultural phenomenon that Black Panther has become. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yP635NDDdc>

- Exploring the ways that we feel and navigate grief is central to this film, in both a fictional and real-world sense. Read this analysis of the film that also considers what it takes to process loss in community. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/on-black-panther-wakanda-forever-grief-reality-in-the-afrofuturist-fantasy>
- *Wakanda Forever* is also an example of cross-cultural world building. Read this reflection on how the film portrays Indigenous identity in a way that is not often seen in mainstream media. <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2022/11/11191045/wakanda-forever-namor-indigenous-latine-representation>

Discussion Questions:

- Is it important that your 'heroes' (literal or figurative) look like you, or have identities that are similar to your own? Why?
- What is your relationship to grief, and what do you learn from it? What does it mean to grieve in community?
- How can you make room for other's stories that you may not be familiar with, but are connected to your own?

The annual Black American Film Festival is sponsored by Acts Fairhaven. The 2024-2025 Carroll County Arts Council Season Sponsor is McDaniel College.

The Carroll County Arts Council appreciates the support we receive from our sponsors, and thanks to that support, this festival is brought to you for free. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to keep the Black American Film Festival free and accessible to everyone.



For quicker access to the links listed in the resource guide, please scan our QR code which takes you directly to the Carroll County Arts Council website!

