

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MVAAFF 24TH ANNIVERSARY OPENS WITH PARAMOUNT PICTURES FEATURING AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK
AT**

CHILDREN OF BLOOD AND BONE

WITH FILMMAKER GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD AND THUSO MBEDU

**ESPN 30 for 30 returns as the Presenting Sponsor, with *New York Magazine's The Cut*, as the
Official Media Partner**

JULY 10, 2026, OAK BLUFFS, MARTHA'S VINEYARD, MA — The Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival (MVAAFF) today announced that Paramount Pictures will kick off Opening Night of the festival's landmark 24th Annual celebration on Friday, August 7, 2026, featuring select footage from the highly anticipated film, *Children of Blood and Bone*, at the Martha's Vineyard Performing Arts Center in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. Following the footage presentation, filmmaker Gina Prince-Bythewood and star Thuso Mbedu will participate in a Color of Conversation panel.

The Oscar qualifying film festival has become one of the nation's leading showcases for Black storytelling, bringing together award-winning filmmakers, industry leaders, and audiences for nine (9) days, of screenings, conversations, networking, and cultural celebration on the island of Martha's Vineyard. ESPN 30 for 30 returns as the Presenting Sponsor, with *New York Magazine's The Cut* as the Official Media Partner "ESPN 30 for 30 is proud to continue sponsoring the Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival. The MVAAFF shares our mission of supporting unique filmmaking voices that need to be heard more than ever, and it remains one of the most inspiring sources of storytelling anywhere," stated Brian M. Lockhart, ESPN Storytelling Studio.

Set against the rich and breathtaking world of Orïsha, "Children of Blood and Bone," based on the #1 New York Times bestselling novel, follows Zélie (Mbedu), a young woman who embarks on a perilous quest to reclaim the magic violently stolen from her people. With a constellation cast including Mbedu, Damson Idris, Amandla Stenberg, Tosin Cole, Cynthia Erivo, Lashana Lynch, Zackary Momoh, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Regina King, Idris Elba and Viola Davis, this epic fantasy is a cultural event unlike any other. The film is scheduled for a nationwide theatrical and IMAX release on January 15, 2027, from Paramount Pictures.

Opening Night at MVAAFF marks one of the film's first public presentations ahead of its nationwide theatrical and IMAX release, giving the MVAAFF community, one of the most culturally engaged and influential audiences an exclusive first look at the epic fantasy. "For twenty-four years, MVAAFF has been a place where groundbreaking stories are introduced to an audience that truly understands their cultural significance," said founders Floyd and Stephanie Rance. "To open this festival with *Children of Blood and Bone*—a film rooted in imagination, heritage, and Black excellence—and to have Gina and Thuso with us at the festival is an extraordinary moment for our community. We're honored that Paramount Pictures has chosen

Martha's Vineyard as one of the first places audiences will experience what we believe will become one of the defining films of this generation."

Additional programming throughout opening weekend will feature presentations of Netflix's "The Baddest Speechwriter of All" and "Jean-Michel Basquiat," exploring the transformative power of words and art through the enduring legacies of Clarence B. Jones and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Roku Originals' "gamechangers: Mother/Athlete," directed by Christine Turner and featuring Sheryl Swoopes, will also screen, alongside the independent features "Black is Beautiful: The Kwame Brathwaite Story" and "Romare Bearden: A Life in Collage." The lineup also includes "Soul Patrol," the untold story of the Vietnam War's first Black special ops team, with a discussion moderated by Henry Louis 'Skip' Gates, Jr. with Secretary John Kerry. Storyteller's Lab will host a special screening of Route 187, from Tyler Perry Studios and Executive Producer Mark Swinton, bringing together HBCU students, industry leaders, and community, the initiative celebrates the power of storytelling while investing in the next generation of creators."

Programming in the Vineyard Lounge includes a presentation by the National Museum of African American History and Culture entitled: 10 Years Of Collecting and Preserving Black Film at the NMAAHC, Norfolk University will present "More than a March: Rise of the Legion - The Power of HBCU Storytelling," Lincoln will present "Joy, Uninterrupted", a panel conversation about how joy shapes creative work featuring creatives Brittney Janae, Nneka Julia and Asia Milia Ware and hosted by Lindsay Peoples, Editor-in-Chief of The Cut, The W.K. Kellogg Foundation will host two conversations: "Rewriting History: The Promise and Power of Narrative Equity," featuring legendary actor Glynn Turman; and, in partnership with GLAAD, "Reel Change: Black Film, Culture, and the Stories that Shape Us." The JXN Project and Ancestors' Wildest Dreams will lead "Declarations: Black Americans and the Revolutionary War." Additionally, Stephanie Rance will host a conversation with the Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc. (P.E.C.) to mark the national launch of Eatonville Rising, celebrating 140 years of Historic Eatonville, Florida, and 90 years of Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God. And, Renowned New York contemporary artist Guy Stanley Philoche, will also discuss his current body of work and preserving our legacy through art. A collection of Philoche's "Give Us Our Flowers" series will be on view at the Mariposa Museum from August 7th-15th.

The annual festival schedule is packed with additional screenings, panels, and surprises, all happening at **Martha's Vineyard Performing Arts Center (MVPAC)** and the Vineyard Lounge (VL), 100 Edgartown Road, Oak Bluffs, MA 02557. For the full schedule and more information, visit www.mvaaff.com.

Follow MVAFF:

#MVAFF2026 #SummersFinestFilmFestival

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mvaaff>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/mvaaff/>

TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@summersfinestfilmfest>
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@MVAFF>

Media Inquiries:

Sonya Ede Williams

publicity@runandshootfilmworks.com

Amelia Winfree

Festival Director

Amelia@runandshootfilmworks.com