



We Heart We Synergy
Haitian Dominican Transnational Film Festival

2023
Festival Program



About Nou Akoma Nou Sinèrji Haitian Dominican Transnational Film Festival

Nou Akoma Nou Sinèrji Haitian Dominican Transnational Film Festival aims to showcase art and films from emerging and accomplished industry professionals of the Haitian Dominican African Diaspora to reflect our community's diverse experiences and backgrounds authentically. Its three-day programming in October 2023 promotes cultural diversity through various art genres, including dramatic, documentary, experimental, short films, and panel discussions.

Nou Akoma Nou Sinèrj, We Heart We Synergy, as an indigenous practice, is invoking symbols and words to shift perspectives and embody ways of practicing goodwill, understanding, endurance, and patience as we cooperate, reconciling and healing the fractured parts to create a whole, humanizing Black and Indigenous people.

Thus, "no person is an island," we are not isolated people; we are directly impacted by what occurs in one location thousands of miles away across the globe. Once we shift our gaze, we recognize the similarities of the crisis impacting not just these two nations but many nations around the world dealing with statelessness, migration, ecological disaster, racialization, poverty, xenophobia, neoliberalism, nationalism, white supremacy and anti-blackness, border walls, and encampments. Nou Akoma Nou Sinèrji Haitian Dominican Transnational Film Festival is counteracting divisive ideologies and messages.

Founded by Dominicans Love Haitians Movement, Nou Akoma Nou Sinèrji Transnational Film Festival is a three-day festival celebrating a transnational experience that extends beyond the borders of these two nations and encompasses the experiences of the Haitian and Dominican Diaspora globally.

2023 Film Festival

Wednesday October 11

10:00 - 11:45am
Registration, Mingle

10:30am
Healing Session

11:00am
Healing Session

12:00pm Lunch
Sandwiches Served

12:30pm
Opening Ceremony

WATER Room - Ground Level
12:50 - 2:50pm
El Hijo de Maria y Oguis
(Jose Peña Gomez)
Daughters of the Sea
Stateless

EARTH Room - Lower Level
12:50 - 2:40pm
Colours in the Dust
Papa Machete
Haiti is a Nation of Artists

EARTH Room - Lower Level
2:50 - 4:50pm
Josue--Mangroves
Death by a Thousand Cuts

Thursday October 12

WATER Room - Ground Level
10:00 - 12:10pm
El Hijo de Maria y Oguis
(Jose Peña Gomez)
Jean Gentil
Colours in the Dust

EARTH Room - Lower Level
10:00 - 12:00pm
Forever Twins
Please In Spanish
Id
The One in the Mirror
Cotton Candy

12:00pm Lunch
Sandwiches Served

WATER Room - Ground Level
12:30 - 2:30pm
Cheche Lavi

EARTH Room - Lower Level
12:30 - 2:40pm
How (Not) To Build A
School in Haiti

WATER Room - Ground Level
3:00 - 4:50pm
Massacre River

EARTH Room - Lower Level
2:50 - 4:20pm
Madan Sara

EARTH Room - Lower Level
4:30 - 5:30pm
Daughters of the Sea
Brooklyn to Benin: A Vodou
Pilgrimage
Espiritus en Marcha
The One in the Mirror
sisters by water

Friday October 13

WATER Room - Ground Level
10:00 - 12:00pm
El Hijo de Maria y Oguis
(Jose Peña Gomez)
Elena
Massacre River

EARTH Room - Lower Level
10:00 - 12:00pm
Stateless

12:00pm Lunch
Sandwiches Served

WATER Room - Ground Level
12:30 - 1:40pm
Papa Machete
Brooklyn to Benin: A Vodou
Pilgrimage
sisters by water
Espiritus en Marcha

EARTH Room - Lower Level
12:20 - 2:15pm
Colours in the Dust
Haiti is a Nation of Artists
Soup Joumou
Espiritus en Marcha

WATER Room - Ground Level
2:00 - 4:36pm
Death by a Thousand Cuts

EARTH Room - Lower Level
2:00 - 4:30pm
Jean Gentil

5:00 - 6:00pm
Closing Awards Ceremony



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2023 Film Selection

<p>Brooklyn to Benin: A Vodou Pilgrimage</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Short Documentary</p> <p>Producer Regine Romain</p> <p>Director Regine Romain</p>	<p>“Brooklyn to Benin: A Vodou Pilgrimage” begins with an aerial view of the Route des Esclaves (Slave Road) in Ouidah, which terminates at the Atlantic Ocean. Millions of captured Africans were shipped off into slavery for hundreds of years from this location in Benin (formerly Dahomey), West Africa. In tandem to the shifting gaze from the road to the ocean, a traditional prayer is spoken in Fon, an indigenous language of the region, and is performed by Adissowé, a Vodou high priestess.</p>
<p>Chèche Lavi</p> <p>2019</p>	<p>Documentary</p> <p>Producers Rachel Cantave, Abraham Ávila, Nora Mendis, Kyle Martin, and Kim Parker</p> <p>Director Sam Ellison</p>	<p>Chèche Lavi is a lyrical portrait of two Haitian migrants, Robens and James, who find themselves stranded at the US-Mexico border with no way forward and no one to depend on but each other. The quiet, unexpected tenderness of their friendship shines in the eye of an incomprehensible geopolitical storm, even as the two men drift towards drastically different futures... and a new wall rises on the horizon.</p>
<p>Colours in the Dust WHY POVERTY?</p> <p>2012</p>	<p>Short Documentary</p> <p>Producers Gabriel Films, Cine Institute & Steps International</p> <p>Directors Massena “Bougon” Cesar, Huguens Saintil, Jean Peirre Belony, Nicolas Cuellar & Jonathan Stack</p>	<p>Can a boy paint his way out of poverty?</p> <p>1.5 million Haitians were left homeless by the earthquake in 2010. Ten-year-old Jouvens Latour survives Haiti’s earthquake but amidst the suffering turns poverty into opportunity.</p> <p>This film was originally released as part of THE WHY series WHY POVERTY? Learn more about the project: https://www.thewhy.dk/docuseries/why-poverty</p>
<p>Cotton Candy</p> <p>2020</p>	<p>Short Narrative</p> <p>Producer Fredgy Noel</p> <p>Director Fredgy Noel</p>	<p>“Cotton Candy” follows two competing teenage beach vendors. Marie (Haitian-American) and David (Dominican-American) are descendants of the magical island of Hispaniola--their two countries separated by a river, a sordid colonialist past, and unimaginable acts of hate. Fleeing volatile governments and seeking safety, both families have built lives in the Bronx.</p>

<p>Daughters of the Sea</p> <p>2022</p>	<p>Short Narrative</p> <p>Producer Nedge Victome</p> <p>Director Nedge Victome</p>	<p>Evangeline, a barren woman goes out to the sea to pray for a miracle healing that will allow her to conceive a child. While there, she is met by a divine presence that takes her on a magical journey.</p>
<p>Death by a Thousand Cuts</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Documentary</p> <p>Producers Jake Kheel, Ben Selkow</p> <p>Directors Juan Mejia Botero, Jake Kheel</p>	<p>The vicious murder of a park ranger sparks an investigation into the illicit charcoal trade causing deforestation of the island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. As trees fall, national tensions rise in this gripping survival story.</p>
<p>Elena</p> <p>2021</p>	<p>Short Documentary</p> <p>Producer Michèle Stephenson</p> <p>Director Michèle Stephenson</p>	<p>In 2013, the Dominican Republic's Supreme Court stripped the citizenship of anyone with Haitian parents, retroactive to 1929, rendering more than 200,000 people stateless. Now Elena and her family stand to lose their residency unless they find their documents in time.</p>
<p>El Hijo de Maria y Oguis (Jose Peña Gómez)</p> <p>2023</p>	<p>Short Documentary</p> <p>Producer Simón Rodríguez Robelitz Pérez</p> <p>Director Simón Rodríguez Robelitz Pérez</p>	<p>A short documentary about Jose Peña Gómez, a Dominican political leader of Haitian descent.</p>
<p>Espíritus en Marcha</p> <p>2023</p>	<p>Music Video</p> <p>Producer Mónica Ortiz Rossi</p> <p>Director William Alexander Runnels</p>	<p>Espíritus en Marcha--the song and music video--illuminates the link between the struggles of those working in America, in Cabrera, Dominican Republic, and throughout time on the Island of Ayiti/Quisqueya.</p> <p>Like the song, the video draws inspiration from the first enslaved person's revolt in the Americas. Led by Maria Olofa and Gonzalo Mandinga. The 1521 rebellion centered Black humanity and occurred on the sugar plantation of Diego Colón (son of Cristobal Colón aka Christopher Columbus).</p>

<p>Forever Twins</p> <p>2022</p>	<p>Experimental Short</p> <p>Producer Rulx Noel</p> <p>Director Rulx Noel</p>	<p>Growing up in Haiti, nobody ever mentioned anything regarding my sisters' and my twinhood, since we have the same date of birth and were raised in the same household, we assumed we had the same mom and dad. Years later as adults, we found out my mother was not my sister's biological mother. I have decided to confront those involved.</p>
<p>Haiti Is A Nation Of Artists</p> <p>2022</p>	<p>Documentary</p> <p>Producer Jacquil Constant</p> <p>Director Jacquil Constant</p>	<p>Haiti Is A Nation Of Artists tells the story of Haitian artists creating transformational art after the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010. The documentary depicts the humanity of Haitian culture through the lens of a Haitian-American filmmaker who seeks to uplift the rich diversity of Haiti and its historical legacy.</p>
<p>How (not) to Build a School in Haiti</p> <p>2022</p>	<p>Documentary</p> <p>Producer Sebastien Narcisse</p> <p>Director Jack C. Newell</p>	<p>HOW (NOT) TO BUILD A SCHOOL IN HAITI documents Tim Myers, a well- intentioned American contractor as he embarks on the construction of a school in rural Haiti following the earthquake of 2010. The seemingly straightforward project is soon entangled in an exploration of globalization, white privilege, and cultural exchange, evolving into a deeper reckoning of race and power.</p>
<p>Id</p> <p>2019</p>	<p>Short Narrative</p> <p>Producers Bechir Sylvain and Gustave Cadet</p> <p>Director Gustave Cadet</p>	<p>What makes you who you are, is sometime the thing you are hiding from. Id.</p>
<p>Jean Gentil</p> <p>2010</p>	<p>Narrative</p> <p>Producers Laura Amelia Guzmán and Israel Cárdenas</p> <p>Directors Laura Amelia Guzmán and Israel Cárdenas</p>	<p>A recently fired Haitian French teacher in Santo Domingo searches for a new job.</p> <p>Filmmakers Laura Amelia Guzmán and Israel Cárdenas have crafted a beautiful tale of alienation, solitude, and existential anxiety, respecting very basic rules of European cinema of the best kind: Jean Gentil is you and I, and his story unfolds with the unhurriedness of real time.</p>

<p>Josue Celiscar and the Mangroves</p> <p>2023</p>	<p>Short Documentary</p> <p>Producer Konbit Media</p> <p>Director Konbit Media</p>	<p>HELP (Haitian Education & Leadership Program) graduate Josue Celiscar plants 50,000 mangroves in Caracol, Haiti.</p>
<p>Madan Sara</p> <p>2021</p>	<p>Documentary</p> <p>Producer Etant Dupain</p> <p>Director Etant Dupain</p>	<p>The women known as Madan Sara in Haiti work tirelessly to buy, distribute, and sell food and other essentials in markets through the country. Despite the obstacles faced by the women working in a sector that lacks investment, infrastructure and state assistance, the Madan Sara continue to be one of the most critical parts of the Haitian economy and of who we are as a country.</p> <p>The Madan Sara documentary tells the stories of these indefatigable women who work at the margins to make Haiti's economy run. Despite facing intense hardship and social stigma, the hard work of the Madan Sara puts their children through school, houses their families, and helps to ensure a better life for generations to come. This film amplifies the calls of the Madan Sara as they speak directly to society to share their dreams for a more just Haiti.</p>
<p>Massacre River</p> <p>2019</p>	<p>Documentary</p> <p>Producer David Byars</p> <p>Director Suzan Beraza</p>	<p>The film follows Pikilina, a Dominican-born woman of Haitian descent, and her family. Racial and political violence erupt when the Dominican Republic reverses its birthright citizenship law.</p>
<p>Papa Machete</p> <p>2014</p>	<p>Short Documentary</p> <p>Producers Jason Jeffers, Keisha Witherspoon, Richard Patterson, Joey Daoud</p> <p>Director Jonathan David Kane</p>	<p>Papa Machete is an intimate account of 'Professor' Alfred Avril, one of the world's only known masters of the esoteric martial art of Haitian machete fencing, known in Creole as 'Tire Machet'. The film documents a proud, but aging man's devotion to his heritage and his desire to continue tradition.</p>

<p>Please In Spanish</p> <p>2023</p>	<p>Short Narrative</p> <p>Producer Patricia Seely</p> <p>Director Patricia Seely</p>	<p>Feeling disconnected from her Dominican heritage, a young woman warms to her cultural identity after meeting a lively neighbor.</p>
<p>sisters by water</p> <p>2023</p>	<p>Short Narrative</p> <p>Producer Vince Sanchez Sambrano</p> <p>Director Shenny De Los Angeles</p>	<p>A Caribbean-American coming-of-age story. Two best friends, bonded by a shared fear of getting into the water, Larimar and Ambar discover how to heal generational wounds through the intimacy of sisterhood.</p>
<p>Soup Joumou</p> <p>2022</p>	<p>Documentary</p> <p>Producer Jacquil Constant</p> <p>Director Ella Turenne</p>	<p>Soup Joumou looks at this cherished dish and its impact on the Haitian diaspora in the Americas. Starting with this small community of Haitians living in Los Angeles, Soup Joumou explores what this favorite meal means to Haitians and how it keeps them connected to their community, history, and culture.</p>
<p>Stateless</p> <p>2020</p>	<p>Documentary</p> <p>Producers Michèle Stephenson, Jennifer Holness, Lea Marint</p> <p>Director Michèle Stephenson</p>	<p>In 2013, the Dominican Republic's Supreme Court stripped the citizenship of anyone with Haitian parents, retroactive to 1929, rendering more than 200,000 people stateless. A young attorney, Rosa Iris, forms a campaign to defend their citizenship.</p>
<p>The One in the Mirror</p> <p>2022</p>	<p>Short Narrative</p> <p>Producers Andrea Perez, Victor Rios</p> <p>Director Rauni Barros Da Silva</p>	<p>Drama about a self-loathing Dominican teenage girl with an identity crisis. Written by Karlina Veras. Starring Wendy Carrasco.</p>

The background of the entire page is a vibrant orange color, overlaid with various tropical plants and leaves in shades of green and dark green. The plants include large, deeply lobed leaves and feathery fronds, creating a lush, jungle-like atmosphere.

Nou Akoma Nou Sinèrji Host Committee

CLARIVEL RUIZ

Founder, Cultural Worker,
Artists, Educator, Activists

Dominicans Love Haitians
Movement

Clarivel Ruiz (we, us, you) child of the African and Indigenous Diaspora, parents from Ayiti Kiskeya (aka Hispaniola, aka the Dominican Republic and Haiti), raised in NYC on the ancestral bones and covered shrines of the Lenape people. In 2018 we initiated Dominicans Love Haitians Movement, Inc., an art-based nonprofit organization. We are alumni of Hemispheric Institute's EmergeNYC, Culture Push's Utopian Fellow, a Civic Practice Seminar participant at the Metropolitan Museum, The Innovative Cultural Advocacy Fellowship at CCCADI, a Brooklyn Arts Council award and Unicorn Fund recipient through New Media Democracy. Clarivel is an MFA graduate of CUNY, City College.

REGINE ROMAIN

Artist | Educator | Visual
Anthropologist | Racial
Justice Strategist | Cultural
Producer

WaWaWa Diaspora Center

Régine Romain is a Haitian-American artist, educator, visual anthropologist and race equity strategist based in Brooklyn, NY. She is founder of the WaWaWa Diaspora Centre and is the director/producer of award-winning film and podcast "Brooklyn to Benin: A Vodou Pilgrimage" and "Vodou Roots: A Love Story Musical." Régine edited "Diaspora Diaries: An Educator's Guide to MoCADA Artists" (2009) and authored "Nou Pap Bliye: A Haitian Coloring Book" (2020) to commemorate Haiti's 2010 tragic earthquake. In 2022 she became a Brooklyn Public Library Heritage Ambassador and recipient of a NYSCA grant in filmmaking. Régine received her BS in International Studies from Bowie State University and MA in Photography and Urban Culture from Goldsmiths, University of London.

ANA-MARIA GARCIA

Retired Community
Developer

Ana-María García has over 40 years experience in community development, leadership training and social and racial justice. She has managed budgets in excess of \$100 million and known for her budgetary prowess. In 1995, a day (Nov 30) was named after her she for her previous five years' body of work which included creation of a specialized project named Project Start; development of training programs for general assistance clients; development of two comprehensive youth centers and creation of a coordinated system of human services. She went on to work for the Census Bureau to familiarize herself with data gathering. She has a Juris Doctorate from Temple University.

**ASHLEY TORRES
CARRASQUILLO**

Educator, Collaborative
& Transdisciplinary
Researcher, Community
Organizer

Ashley Torres Carrasquillo (they/she ella/elle) is a transnational community organizer, a transdisciplinary and collaborative researcher, and an art-based educator; whose work focuses on supporting and documenting anti-racist and anti-colonial community-based projects with adult and youth organizers in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Puerto Rico. Originally from Santurce, Puerto Rico, Ashley holds an M.S. in critical ethnic and community studies, and a BA in women’s, gender, and sexualities studies, from the University of Massachusetts. They are the former coordinator and co-facilitator of the Muñecas Negras project with the Dominicans Love Haitians Movement. They are also the recipient of several grants including the 2022 small grant program from the Ben & Jerry’s Foundation and the 2021 Soros Justice Fellow from the Open Society Foundation, where they co-develop a violence intervention program with youth and adult community organizers. Ashley currently works as the Political Education Coordinator for Mijente, and is an Instructor at the University of Colorado Boulder, Ethnic Studies Department.

MELIMEL

Creative Artist/Graphic
Designer

MelimeL Digital Art Design

Melissa “MelimeL” Lauradin is a creative artist and mompreneur. She is CEO and Lead Graphic Designer of MelimeL Digital Art Design. Her published works as a writer and poet include Beneath the Deep Surface which was re-released for print and e-book in July 2022. Aside from designing and writing, MelimeL enjoys travel, photography, performing, and is an aspiring DJ. She hosted an Annual Women Empowerment Event during Women’s History Month for ten years from 2013-2022 and is currently developing a documentary film about the event. In 2015 and 2019 respectively, MelimeL launched The sisSTAR Loop, a platform for women-owned business and professionals and The Empowerment Network, a digital magazine, with its 10th issue currently in production. Through her creative works she hopes to empower others to excel in their personal and professional lives.

**ANJANETTE
LEVERT**

Documentary Filmmaker
and Professor

Anjanette Levert is a documentary filmmaker, producer, curator, coach and professor. She is the former Director of Spelman College’s Documentary Filmmaking Program. She is the 2022 Recipient of the Presidential Teaching Award at Spelman College. An invited panelist at the Sundance Producer Summit and a member of the Sundance Producers Intensive. She is the 2022 Recipient of the Presidential Teaching Award at Spelman College. An invited panelist at the Sundance Producer Summit and a member of the Sundance Producers Intensive. She is the producer of The Only Doctor by Matthew Hashiguchi which made its World Premiere at Toronto’s Hot Docs International Film Festival in 2023. She is a board member for Jezebel Productions and Atlanta’s MINT Gallery.

M. ASLI DUKAN

Filmmaker, Educator

M. Asli Dukan is a filmmaker who works primarily in the genres of speculative fiction as a subversive, radical and liberatory practice. She has screened at festivals in the U.S., Canada, and on the Black-owned streaming service, KweliTV. She has been the recipient of several grants, awards and fellowships, including a 2020 Sundance Institute Knight Alumni grant. In 2022, she completed Sundown Road, a short film about the residue of racial discrimination, intimidation and violence in the U.S. She is in development on the feature film, Skin Folk, based on the book by the award-winning Caribbean writer, Nalo Hopkinson.

Thank You & Acknowledgments

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Nedge Victome
Ryan DuBois
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for Joining Us!**

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Haitian Dominican Transnational Film Festival
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