8TH ANNUAL
AFRICANAMERICAN
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FILMCRITICSASSOCIATION

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS *Luncheon*

FEBRUARY 2, 2025

LOS ANGELES ATHLETIC CLUB











Using the power of cinema to bring communities together!

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AFRICAN AMERICAN FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION

AND PROUDLY CONGRATULATES OUR
SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD HONOREES

NEXT GEN AWARD

ETHAN HERISSE AND
BRANDON WILSON

AND

KAREN & STANLEY KRAMER SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD

NICKEL BOYS



NICKEL BOYS

DIRECTED BY RAMELL ROSS
SCREENPLAY BY RAMELL ROSS & JOSLYN BARNES
BASED ON THE BOOK "THE NICKEL BOYS" BY COLSON WHITEHEAD

Dear Honorees, Guests, and Supporters:

Welcome to the 8th Annual African American Film Critics Association (AAFCA) Special Achievement Awards Luncheon. It is our honor to host you at the historic Los Angeles Athletic Club as we come together to celebrate trailblazers and luminaries who have reshaped the future of film and television with their bold vision, unwavering dedication to excellence, and commitment to inclusion.

Today, we recognize an extraordinary group of individuals, productions, and organizations that have inspired, challenged, and reminded us of the profound impact representation has in shaping our collective worldview.

This year, we proudly honor:

Brandon Wilson & Ethan Herisse, the recipients of the Next Generation Award
These two exceptional young talents captivated audiences in *Nickel Boys*, the 2024 adaptation of Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. Their performances illuminate the resilience, heartbreak, and unbreakable bond of two boys navigating the horrors of an abusive reform school in 1960s Florida.

Taura Stinson, who is being honored with the Ascension Award
An Oscar, Golden Globe, and Emmy-nominated songwriter and composer, Taura Stinson has collaborated on iconic projects, including *Thelma the Unicorn, Carmen, and Don't Look Up*. Her work has redefined excellence in music for film and television.

Amber Rasberry, the Horizon Award recipient
As Senior Film Executive at Amazon MGM Studios, Amber Rasberry has shaped groundbreaking projects like *Candy Cane Lane and Divorce in the Black*, driving innovation and expanding representation across the industry.

The Karen & Stanley Kramer Social Justice Award is being awarded to *Nickel Boys*
Directed by RaMell Ross, this powerful film adaptation of Whitehead's novel serves as a harrowing reminder of systemic injustice and a call-to-action for accountability and change.

Lynn Whitfield, who we celebrate with the Legacy Award
A legendary talent, Lynn Whitfield has brought unforgettable depth to roles in *The Josephine Baker Story, Greenleaf, Eve's Bayou*, and more, solidifying her place as a trailblazer in the industry.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our sponsors, partners, and supporters whose dedication makes this event possible.

We also thank the first responders and fellow Angelenos for their unity and resilience during these challenging times.

Together, you ensure that AAFCA's mission of excellence and inclusion continues to thrive.

With appreciation,
Gil Robertson
President & Co-Founder
African American Film Critics Association



Brandon WILSON

Ethan HERISSE



NEXT GEN AWARD

The African American Film Critics Association (AAFCA) proudly shines a spotlight on two extraordinary young talents—Brandon Wilson and Ethan Herisse—whose unforgettable performances have captivated audiences and critics alike. Both actors bring remarkable depth and humanity to Nickel Boys, the 2024 film adaptation of Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. Set in 1960s Florida, this powerful story of resilience, heartbreak, and brotherhood is brought to life through their masterful portrayals.

Ethan Herisse, already acclaimed for his gripping performance as a young Yusef Salaam in ***When They See Us***, once again delivers raw emotion and authenticity in ***Nickel Boys***. As Elwood, he showcases a maturing artistry that cements him as a rising star in film and television.

Brandon Wilson, whose standout performances in ***The Way Back*** and ***Ray Donovan*** have earned him critical praise, gives a layered and compelling portrayal of Turner. His performance beautifully complements Herisse's, creating an on-screen connection that resonates deeply.

Together, these two phenomenal actors give voice to a harrowing yet essential chapter of history, reminding us of stories too often left untold.

For their exceptional talent and bright futures, AAFCA proudly honors Brandon Wilson and Ethan Herisse with the Next Generation AAFCA Award.



Taura STINSON

ASCENSION AWARD

From crafting chart-topping hits to creating award-winning compositions, Taura Stinson's career is a masterclass in artistic evolution. As an Oscar, Golden Globe, and Emmy nominee, Stinson's remarkable work spans film, television, and music, consistently leaving an indelible mark on the entertainment world.

The Birmingham-born, Oakland-raised, and Los Angeles-based Stinson has built a career defined by versatility and vision. She has collaborated with top artists, from Brittany Howard on Netflix's ***Thelma the Unicorn*** to Raphael Saadiq on Marvel's ***Moon Girl & Devil Dinosaur,*** which features the standout theme **"Moon Girl Magic."** Her work with Nicholas Britell includes **"Slip Away"** for Sony's **Carmen, "Call Me Cruella"** for Disney's ***Cruella***, and the Oscar-shortlisted **"Just Look Up"** with Ariana Grande and Kid Cudi for Netflix's ***Don't Look Up***.

Recently, Stinson co-wrote three songs for Apple's ***Blitz***, including the poignant **"Winter Coat"** performed by Saoirse Ronan. Her collaborations with Mary J. Blige and Raphael Saadiq earned an Academy Award nomination for **"Mighty River" *(Mudbound)***, while **"All About Me" *(The L-Word: Generation Q)*** earned her an Emmy nod. Additional credits include Pharrell Williams (***Harlem***), Disney's ***Cheaper by the Dozen***, and BET's ***Sunday Best***, featuring the GRAMMY-winning **"Jesus"** by Le'Andria Johnson.

As a mentor, author, and founder of Believe Become Books, Stinson continues to display a level of creativity and success that shows her creative and cultural impact. It is for this reason that AAFCA is honored to celebrate her with the 2025 Ascension Award.



NICKEL BOYS

KAREN & STANLEY KRAMER SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD

In a year of powerful storytelling, the American Film Critics Association (AAFCA) proudly awards the 2025 Karen & Stanley Kramer Social Justice Award to ***Nickel Boys.*** This honor recognizes films that spotlight social justice issues, continuing the legacy of Stanley Kramer, a filmmaker known for tackling topics like racial equality and freedom of thought.

Nickel Boys, the debut feature from Academy Award-nominated director RaMell Ross, is based on Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. Set in the 1960s, the film follows the harrowing journey of two young African American boys, Elwood and Turner, as they endure the horrors of a segregated reform school in Florida. Through their story of resilience and defiance, the film sheds light on systemic injustice while honoring the silenced voices of the past.

With captivating performances by Ethan Herisse, Brandon Wilson, and Aunjanue Ellis, ***Nickel Boys*** vividly captures the pain and hope of a turbulent era. It's more than a historical drama—it's a clarion call to action, urging us to confront uncomfortable truths and reflect on the ongoing fight for justice.

AAFCA is honored to present this award to ***Nickel Boys***, a film that not only preserves history but demands accountability and inspires change.



Amber RASBERRY

HORIZON AWARD

The AAFCA Horizon Award honors trailblazers breaking barriers and redefining Hollywood. This year, we are proud to recognize **Amber Rasberry**, a creative force who has spent over 15 years crafting stories that inspire, unite, and resonate with audiences around the globe.

She currently serves as Senior Film Executive for Development, Production & Acquisition at Amazon MGM Studios. Since joining in 2020, Rasberry's impact has been undeniable. She has overseen record-breaking projects like ***A Million Miles Away, Maxine's Baby: The Tyler Perry Story***, and the Eddie Murphy-led ***Candy Cane Lane***, which became one of Prime Video's most popular global debuts. Under her leadership, Tyler Perry's ***Divorce in The Black*** drove more U.S. Prime Video sign-ups than any other Amazon MGM Studios-produced film to date.

Her influence reaches far beyond Amazon, however. At Paramount Players, Rasberry was instrumental in the success of ***The United States vs. Billie Holiday***, directed by Lee Daniels. At Kevin Hart's Laugh Out Loud Network, she spearheaded the launch of his network to help create original series and films, further solidifying her reputation for championing projects that create mass appeal.

Rasberry's journey began at Tyler Perry Studios, where she served as Director of Development for its subsidiary, 34th St Films. There, she acquired ***Precious***, which went on to win an Academy Award, and helped assemble the star-studded cast for the movie adaptation of ***For Colored Girls***. Her earlier work includes shaping projects at State Street Pictures, contributing to iconic films like ***Barbershop***, as well as music videos and commercials for New Line Cinema.

Throughout her career, Rasberry has elevated underrepresented voices, nurtured groundbreaking creativity, and reshaped Hollywood's narrative landscape.

Join us in celebrating Amber Rasberry, the visionary recipient of the 2025 AAFCA Horizon Award.



Lynn WHITFIELD

LEGACY AWARD

Lynn Whitfield is a true luminary of stage, television, and film—a woman whose grace, talent, and dedication to her craft have left an undeniable imprint on Hollywood and beyond.

Hailing from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Whitfield's passion for acting was ignited at an early age. Her desire to act was nurtured by her parents, who were both deeply involved in the arts, and her grandmother, who frequently took her to the movies as a child.

A proud Howard University graduate, Whitfield launched her professional journey on stage, performing with the Black Repertory Company in Washington, D.C. Whitfield sharpened her skills in off-Broadway productions such as ***The Great MacDaddy*** and ***Showdown Time***, as well as in the iconic touring production of ***For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf***.

She made her television debut on the groundbreaking drama ***Hill Street Blues*** and quickly transitioned to the big screen in ***Doctor Detroit***. Her star power grew with standout roles alongside Denzel Washington in ***The George McKenna Story*** and as the title character in ***Johnnie Mae Gibson: FBI***, culminating in a powerful performance in the ensemble cast of ***The Women of Brewster Place***.

Her career-defining moment came with a mesmerizing portrayal of Josephine Baker in ***The Josephine Baker Story***, a role that earned her critical acclaim and solidified her status as a leading actress. This success paved the way for unforgettable performances in films such as ***Stompin' at the Savoy***, ***The Wedding***, ***A Thin Line Between Love and Hate***, ***Gone Fishin'***, ***The Planet of Junior Brown***, and the acclaimed indie masterpiece ***Eve's Bayou***. Whitfield later captivated audiences as the formidable Lady Mae in the hit series ***Greenleaf***.

An Emmy Award winner and Golden Globe nominee, Whitfield continues to shine, recently earning two NAACP Image Award nominations for her work in the independent feature ***Albany Road*** and Showtime's acclaimed series ***The Chi***, where she brought Alicia to life with depth and nuance.

With a career defined by complex, layered characters that resonate with the beauty and intricacies of the human experience, Lynn Whitfield exemplifies excellence in storytelling. For her unparalleled contributions to the arts, AAFCA is proud to honor her with the 2025 Legacy Award.

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thanks the
African American Film Critics Association
and proudly congratulates our honoree



Horizon Award

Amber Rasberry

Senior Executive, Film Production and Development,
Amazon MGM Studios

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Executive Producer: Gil Robertson IV

Producer: Abdul Malik Abbott

Associated Producer: Shon Fuller

Technical Director: Justin Jemerson

Script: Vincent Durham Terrell

Guest Relations: Scott Hamilton

Art/Graphics: Kimberly Malhoit

Voice Over: Condace Pressley

Editor: Marcia Cole

Coordinator: Trina Kort

Payroll & Bookkeeping: Jeaunine Askew & Shashanna Singh

Public Relations: Perception PR

Photographer: Sheri Determan

Videographer: Yoshua Khan

AAFCA, Thanks Morgan Stanley - Sports & Entertainment Wealth, Comcast, Amazon Prime, APPLE TV + and AIDS Healthcare Foundation for their support.

Congratulations

LYNN WHITFIELD

on receiving The AAFCA Legacy Award!



Your brilliance, artistry and enduring impact on cinema and television have inspired generations. This honor is a testament to your stellar legacy and unwavering excellence.

From The Swanson Family

Michael, Christine, Cole, Kenji, Luke and Julia

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Congratulations to songwriter

Taura Stinson

on being honored with the

Ascension Award

by the African American
Film Critics Association

BLITZ