

**RICH SPIRIT**

# **BLKNWS: TERMS & CONDITIONS**

A Film by **Kahlil Joseph**



**International Premiere – Berlin International Film Festival 2025 – [Perspectives](#)**

**Press Materials: <https://tinyurl.com/BLKNWS>**

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United States / 2025 / 113 minutes

## LOGLINE

Conceived as a cinematic experience mirroring the sonic textures of a record album – with guest artists interspersed across its 21 tracks and a unique soundscape mastered in stereo, **BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions** weaves fiction and history in an immersive journey spanning 247 years across land and sea.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

Conceived as a cinematic experience that mirrors the sonic textures of a record album, **BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions** is adapted from Kahlil Joseph's renowned video art installation. The film's unique soundscape is mastered in stereo, with featured guest artists interwoven across its 21 tracks, each adding their distinct perspective. Drawing inspiration from W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Saidiya Hartman, and others, the film juxtaposes their ideas with samples from YouTube, social media, film, television, and journalism. **BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions** blends fictional and historical characters into an immersive story spanning 247 years across land and sea.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

**BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions** is a distinctive cinematic experience that mirrors the sonic textures of a record album. Adapted from Kahlil Joseph's renowned video art installation, the film intertwines fictional and historical characters within an immersive story that spans 247 years across land and sea. Aboard the TransAtlantic ship *The Nautica*, the ocean reveals its mysteries to passengers who will pause and listen. For a viewer, the film serves as a vessel for anamnesis by awakening Black collective memories and unearthing buried diasporic histories through its layered narrative.

**BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions** functions as a hybrid of forms – narrative and documentary, taking inspiration from W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Saidiya Hartman, and others and juxtaposing their ideas with archival material and sampling from YouTube, social media, film, TV, and journalism.

The film's unique stereo sound is mastered by a music engineer instead of a conventional 5.1 mix. Guest directors, including Arthur Jafa and Garrett Bradley,

bring their distinct perspectives like featured artists across its 21 tracks resulting in a layered, multidimensional experience that explores Black history, identity, and the intoxication of freedom.

Joseph's BLKNWS original two-channel video installation has been exhibited in museums and art spaces worldwide since 2018, including the 2019 Venice Biennale and the 2020 Sundance Film Festival.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

**BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions** is a film conceived with the fluidity and creativity of an album. This approach allowed me to think beyond traditional boundaries, embracing a process that seamlessly incorporates the contributions of other directors, artists, and collaborators. Poets, writers, editors, designers, musicians, scholars, and more have all left their mark on this project, enriching its texture and expanding its scope.

The film draws inspiration from a range of cultural and artistic touchstones: *BLKNWS* itself, the improvisational brilliance of *Kind of Blue*, the late works of Jean-Luc Godard, and the critical fabulations of Saidiya Hartman. It is shaped by conversations with Fred Moten, David Hammons, and Malik Sayeed, as well as the grounding influence of Cristina Sharpe, Dionne Brand, and the spiritual traditions of Ifá and West African cosmologies. At its heart is a profound belief in myself, my voice, and the love of my family and ancestors.

**BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions** brings together every format of the moving image I've engaged with—cinema, video art, music video, social media, and documentary. It is a layered, multi-dimensional exploration of what the moving image can achieve, both as an artistic medium and as a tool for cultural critique.

## TRACKLIST

1. Encyclopedia Africana
2. Earthworks
3. Fugitive Status (feat. Gyimah Gariba)
4. This is a Film
5. Hurston Cinematheque
6. BBC Nautica
7. The Granddaughter
8. A Spiritual Commitment (feat. Steven Traylor) [Interlude]
9. The Social Scientist (feat. Kaneza Schaal)
10. The Thinking Machine [Interlude]
11. Insurance (feat. Cameron Rowland)
12. De Onde Vem? [From where are you from?]
13. #1 - Currency
14. Source Material
15. Intoxicated with Freedom
16. Reflection Eternal (feat. Garrett Bradley)
17. Dark Matter (feat. Dionne Brand)
18. The Wake
19. The Resonance Field
20. SOS (feat. Arthur Jafa)
21. #2 - Foreign Banks [credits]

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

**KAHLIL JOSEPH (Director/Writer/Producer/Editor)** is an acclaimed artist and filmmaker known for his visionary approach to storytelling through film and video installations. His work challenges conventional linear narratives, using sound and music as materials to evoke lyricism and complexity.

Born in Seattle, Joseph began his career working for photographer Melodie McDaniel and director Terrence Malick. His early visual style was influenced by the experimental films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and references to Andrei Tarkovsky and Chris Marker coexist alongside an exploration of the vastness of the Black experience. Joseph first gained widespread recognition with his 2013 short film, "Until the Quiet Comes," for musician Flying Lotus, which won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

A hallmark of Joseph's practice is his ability to create works that bridge art and community. His most ambitious and ongoing project is BLKNWS, a conceptual artwork and business that redefines how Black culture is experienced and communicated. Conceived as a continuous, curated broadcast, BLKNWS merges news clips, social media content, and cultural artifacts into a dynamic stream that reflects the richness of Black life. First showcased at the Venice Biennale in 2019, BLKNWS has since expanded into a networked platform, featuring satellite installations in barbershops, cafés, and community spaces.

Joseph's work has been featured in major exhibitions worldwide, including the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement in Geneva, and the Frye Art Museum in Seattle. His celebrated short film "Fly Paper" premiered at his solo exhibition "Shadow Play" at New York's New Museum in 2017 and was later showcased internationally in Berlin, London, and Los Angeles.

He has directed music videos for artists such as Kendrick Lamar, FKA Twigs, Sampha, and Beyoncé, and has also filmed commercials and short films for companies including O2 and Kenzo.

Joseph has also served as creative director for The Underground Museum. Founded in 2013 by his late brother Noah Davis, the Los Angeles independent art space and community hub is a pioneering venue for accessible and innovative exhibitions.

**ONYE ANYANWU (Producer/Writer)** launched her career in New York City as a casting director, collaborating with acclaimed filmmakers like Errol Morris and Mark Romanek on groundbreaking music videos and commercials. The writer, producer, and filmmaker is a graduate of the American Film Institute's MFA program and the inaugural recipient of the Disney–Jerry Bruckheimer Scholarship. Onye began her producing journey with director Andrew Dosunmu's feature film "Restless City."

Onye co-founded Gamma Wave Films with Kahlil Joseph, a production company bridging the worlds of cinema and fine art. Over the past decade, she has produced an array of films, documentaries, visual albums, and art installations, including Arthur Jafa's "Dreams Are Colder Than Death" (acquired by MoMA), Kahlil Joseph's "m.a.a.d." (acquired by MOCA), and Beyoncé's Peabody Award-winning visual album "Lemonade."

Her other notable projects include "Process," a music film with UK artist Sampha; "Fly Paper," commissioned by The New Museum; "Black Mary," commissioned by Tate London; and BLKNWS, which premiered at the 58th Venice Biennale. A founding board member of The Underground Museum in Los Angeles, Onye played a vital role in shaping the influential cultural space.

**JAMES SHANI (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)** is a film producer, indie distributor and founder of Rich Spirit, a studio dedicated to transformative storytelling through film, community, and cultural experiences. Known for films like GULLY, MAMA BEARS, and most recently acquiring and co-distributing Ali Abbasi's Oscar-nominated THE APPRENTICE starring Sebastian Stan and Jeremy Strong, Shani's projects shine a light on the roots of social issues in order to inspire transformation in audiences. In addition to his contributions to Hollywood, Shani has been nominated for three VMA's, having produced music videos for artists like Lady Gaga, Nas, H.E.R., Snoh Aalegra, and John Legend. Through his studio's initiatives, Shani supports

marginalized voices, investing in and creating impact-driven programs that empower a new generation of storytellers.

**ANIKAH MCLAREN (Executive Producer)** is the Head of Film at Higher Ground, Barack and Michelle Obama's production company. With a career spanning top studios and production companies with a dedication to impactful storytelling, McLaren previously served as Executive Vice President of Narrative Film at Participant. Working as the co-head of development and production for narrative film there, she was instrumental in the making of the Toronto International Film Festival Changemaker Award winner "We Grown Now," Academy Award®-winning film "Judas and the Black Messiah," as well as John Ridley's "Shirley," starring Regina King. She also oversaw films like "The Old Man and the Gun" and the development of Barry Jenkins' Alvin Ailey biopic during her time as Senior Vice President of Production at Fox Searchlight Pictures. McLaren served as a production executive at Universal Pictures, where she worked on a wide variety of films, including "Scott Pilgrim vs. the World," "The Bourne Legacy," "The Best Man Holiday," and "Lone Survivor." McLaren has also held positions at Focus Features and Miramax Films. She received her BA in English from The George Washington University and resides in Los Angeles.

**DAVID LINDE's (Executive Producer)** background spans production and global distribution as well as building multiple companies from the ground up. He has served as the CEO of Participant, the chairman of Universal Pictures, co-founder of specialty film studio Focus Features, partner in the New York production company Good Machine and owner of Lava Bear Films, where he produced multi-Oscar® nominee Arrival.

At Participant, he oversaw the complex but vital work of accelerating impact and narrative change in collaboration with culturally significant films and television series. During his tenure, the company's productions included Oscar® Best Picture winners Spotlight and Green Book; Oscar® winner for Best Documentary Feature, American Factory, Oscar® winners for Best International Features ROMA and A Fantastic Woman; as well as acclaimed, award-winning long-form content including Steve James' docuseries America To Me and Ava DuVernay's When They See Us.



Linde has long championed the voice of signature filmmakers, having worked on multiple films with Pedro Almodóvar, Sofia Coppola, Alfonso Cuarón, Todd Haynes, Ang Lee, Alejandro González Iñárritu and Tom McCarthy, among many others.

Linde currently serves on the Board of Directors of the British Academy of Motion Picture Film and Television Arts/North America, the American Film Institute's Board of Trustees, the Board of Directors of Film Independent, and the Advisory Council of Brooklyn College's Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema.

**STEVEN SODERBERGH (Executive Producer)** is a writer, director, producer, cinematographer and editor.

He most recently directed the feature film "Presence," which marks his second collaboration with screenwriter David Koepp, following the 2022 thriller "KIMI." He directed the feature film "Magic Mike's Last Dance" for Warner Bros., and the Max limited series "Full Circle." His next feature, "Black Bag," is forthcoming in spring 2025 from Focus Features. He earned the Academy Award in 2000 for directing "Traffic," the same year he was nominated for "Erin Brockovich"; and an Emmy Award for Outstanding Directing for his 2013 HBO film "Behind the Candelabra." Soderbergh earlier received an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay for "sex, lies, and videotape," his feature film directorial debut. That film also won the Palme d'Or at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival.

Among his other credits as director are the limited series "Mosaic" (HBO), the self-distributed web series "Command Z," the television series "The Knick" (Cinemax), and the films "Let Them All Talk," "The Laundromat," "High Flying Bird," "Unsane," "Logan Lucky," "Side Effects," "Magic Mike," "Haywire," "Contagion," "And Everything is Going Fine," "The Girlfriend Experience," "The Informant! Che," the "Ocean"'s trilogy, "The Good German," "Bubble," "Equilibrium," "Solaris," "Full Frontal," "The Limey," "Out of Sight," "Gray's Anatomy," "Schizopolis," "The Underneath," "King of the Hill" and "Kafka."

## ABOUT BLKNWS

*BLKNWS* is a groundbreaking platform that reimagines what a media company can be. Born out of a vision to redefine journalism, art, and storytelling, *BLKNWS* operates at the intersection of culture, creativity, and context.

Unlike traditional media companies focused on constant content churn, *BLKNWS* is a regenerative ecosystem. It curates, contextualizes, and reframes existing narratives to uncover deeper truths, making sense of a world oversaturated with noise.

Since its inception in 2018, *BLKNWS* has grown from a two-channel video installation into a globally recognized post-media company, seamlessly moving between film, art, education, and public engagement. From Venice to Sundance, from community spaces to digital platforms, *BLKNWS* delivers context-driven content that is timeless, thought-provoking, and deeply connected to the communities it serves.

At its heart, *BLKNWS* is driven by a philosophy of “conceptual journalism,” which posits that “anything can be news, given context.” News is not just the “when” or “what” of a headline; it is the act of discovery, of turning the unknown into the known.

This approach challenges the rigid constraints of traditional journalism, where immediacy and observable facts reign supreme. Instead, *BLKNWS* explores the idea that stories, insights, and revelations can emerge from unexpected places, across time, and through the creative lens of art and culture.

Consider this: the science and tech breakthroughs fueling Wall Street today often trace back to speculative ideas in science fiction written decades ago by Black women and other visionary futurists. What was once considered fiction has shaped the future we now inhabit. This reality illustrates the need for a broader definition of news—one that embraces the imaginative and the archival, the visionary and the overlooked. By adopting an atemporal and non-linear framework, *BLKNWS* invites audiences to reconsider not just what news is, but what it can be.

**BLKNWS** began in 2017 as a pitch for a 30-minute television news show. When all the major media companies passed on the idea, founder Kahlil Joseph took matters into his own hands. Working out of his studio garage, he and his longtime collaborators at Parallax Post began editing together a stream-of-consciousness blend of video, art, and journalism.

These early experiments found homes in unexpected places: first at the men's clothing store Union LA, where BLKNWS was featured in their newly constructed store in Japan. Shortly after, a more local installation emerged at the Underground Museum bookstore in Los Angeles. There, short BLKNWS reels played as part of the famed Purple Garden Cinema summer film series.

In 2018, a chance studio visit from curator Ralph Rugoff changed everything. Rugoff invited Joseph to present his fledgling project at the 2019 Venice Biennale. It was during this time that Kahlil realized *BLKNWS* was much more than a 30-minute news program. It became clear that *BLKNWS* could be both a work of art and a conceptual media company—fueled by the ethos and understanding of journalism.

That same year, Kahlil was invited to Stanford University as the inaugural visiting artist for the Presidential Residencies on the Future of the Arts. At Stanford, he deepened his ideas through collaborations with law scholars, journalism postgraduates, art historians, curators, and business professors. His most impactful exchanges were with Bill Burnett of Stanford's d.school, where the concept of *BLKNWS* as a "post-media company" was born.

After Stanford, *BLKNWS* debuted at the Venice Biennale as a two-channel video installation, gaining international acclaim. Joseph embraced *BLKNWS* as a work of art, showcasing it in museums and galleries around the world. By this point, *BLKNWS* had also reached unique and unusual spaces like an underground train station in Geneva, and boutique hotels and barber shops in Washington DC. The journey culminated in the Hammer Museum's *Made in L.A. 2020*. Amid COVID-19 lockdowns, curators reimagined the work's installation footprint: instead of a single venue, *BLKNWS* appeared across Los Angeles in cafes, neighborhood grocery stores, community organizations, and retail shops. This marked a bold expansion of the project beyond the art world, further embedding it into everyday life.

In 2020, the project gained even more recognition when a 40-minute excerpt of the *BLKNWS* "broadcast" was featured in the Sundance Film Festival's New Frontier section. It was here that a Hollywood film executive suggested Kahlil consider *BLKNWS* as a feature film, signaling yet another evolution for this boundary-pushing work.

## CREDITS

PARTICIPANT

Presents

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Just Films | Ford Foundation

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