



REEL SISTERS OF THE DIASPORA

Film Festival + Lecture Series

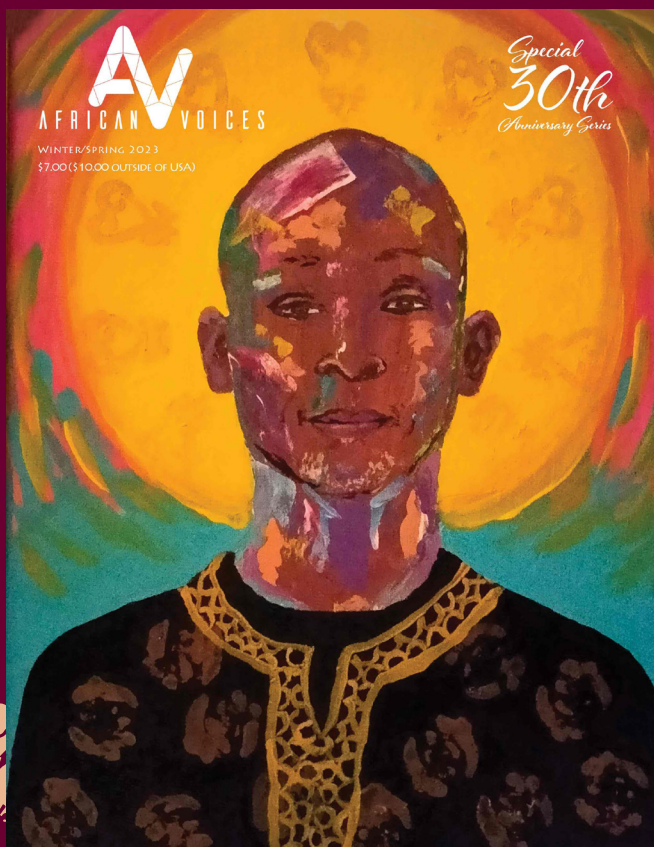
Women . Films . Empowerment. Celebrating women of color across the globe

Sydney G. James: "How We See Us"



October 11 - November 9, 2023

www.reelsisters.org



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Dear Friends,



Welcome to the 26th Annual Reel Sisters of the Diaspora Film Festival and Lecture Series.

We are presenting our Reel Sisters Trailblazer Award to Sabrina Schmidt Gordon and Dawn Porter, two dynamic sisters whose work in documentary storytelling is unparalleled. We are honored to recognize Sabrina and Dawn for paving the way for women in film to have their stories air on such major platforms as Netflix and HBO.

As the head of the Black Documentary Collective, Sabrina has provided a space for filmmakers of color to gain professional support, resources and mentorship while Dawn has opened the door for women of color filmmakers through her production company, Trilogy Films.

Please join us in congratulating our honorees and supporting their efforts to ensure women filmmakers have their films greenlit, produced and distributed.

Collectively, we are powerful beyond measure. In 2022, African Voices launched our script to screen program which provided funds to support short film and web series projects. To date, the first two films were premiered in Reel Sisters with the third film by Eboni Price having a world premiere on Oct. 21, 2023 at City Tech Theater in Brooklyn. Please join us for the occasion next Saturday!

Through our Screenwriting and Micro Budget Fellowship Program, Reel Sisters has moved from showcasing films in the festival to funding stories that resonate with our community. Please make a donation to fund our 2024 fellows!

As the first Oscar qualifying film festival for women filmmakers in the nation, we are committed to carving out a space for women of color to reach a global audience.

Reel Sisters is presenting an exciting season with in-person and virtual screenings and events from Oct. 11, 2023 through Nov. 9, 2023. Please visit our website for our film schedule at www.reelsisters.org.

Peace & blessings,

Carolyn A. Butts

Reel Sisters Founder/Festival Director



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Reel Sisters Film Festival Committee 2023



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While We Are Still Here, ImageNation Cinema Foundation,
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BRIC Media, West Harlem Development Corp., Miller Theatre,
St. and City Tech Theater.

Volunteers 2023

Special thanks to all our volunteers!
LaZette McCants and Volunteer Divas & Divos Plus, Volunteers
for Arts & Culture & Community.



Thank You!

PRESENTER

Karen McMullen

Film curator and programmer Karen McMullen is a New York City based film programmer and festival professional. She is the Festival Director and Head of Programming at **Urbanworld** and Senior Programmer at **DOC NYC film festivals**. Formerly, she was **Lead Curator for New Voices in Black Cinema** and **Head of Programming** for the **TIDE Film Festival**. She has been a juror at **Pan African, Trinidad Tobago, Cleveland International, and Bentonville film festivals**, and on the nominating committees for **Gotham Awards, Carey Institute, Black Public Media, and Cinema Eye Honors**. Karen conducts panels and interviews for **HBO, Netflix, Apple, Peacock, NY African Film Festival**, and others, and appears on television and radio as a media expert. She has editing credits on numerous features, documentaries, and short films. Karen was an associate professor teaching post-production at **Long Island University** for ten years and enjoys guest lecturing for schools and film groups. Karen is a graduate of **Brown University** where she majored in **International Relations** and **French Studies**.



PERFORMER

Kimberly Singleton

Filmmaker, Poet, Writer



Kimberly Singleton is a filmmaker, writer and poet. She has written screen and stage plays, as well as produced short films of various genres including comedy, drama and science fiction. She earned a **Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering** from **Howard University** and was employed as the first African American woman engineer at **Con Edison of**

New York. She later obtained an MBA from **New York University's Stern School of Business** and worked for over 20 years in financial management for major media companies.

Singleton's love for filmmaking, poetry and writing led her to study at the Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center, the **Gotham Writers Workshop** and the **African Voices Writers Workshop** to develop her craft. Her short film "**C-Lo: In the Beginning**" was featured at the **Cannes Film Festival Short Film Market** in Cannes, France. Her screenplay, "**Conscious**", which deals with a young poet living with the HIV virus, qualified her as a finalist in the **BET Rap-It-Up** short subject screenplay competition. The stage version of "**Conscious**" was selected to be performed at the 2018 **New York Theater Festival** and was produced by the **New Jersey Creative Arts Collective** in 2020. As a poet, Singleton's photo-illustrated, book-length poem "**I Love My People**" was published this year by Broadleaf Books, a division of 1517 Media. This poem celebrates African American culture and Black resistance.

Singleton is the Executive Producer and Host of the television show and podcast **Consider It Blacklit**, a weekly program highlights movies, television and plays featuring African Americans. The Consider It Blacklit television show was the winner of the Public Media Awards of Excellence "**Best Informative Talk Show**" in 2018 and 2019. The Consider It Blacklit show also won three awards at the 2023 **B Free Awards** hosted by **Brooklyn Free Speech** television and radio.

PERFORMER

Letrice Arlene Cherry-Sturdivant

Professional Vocalist, Band Leader, Vocalist



Letrice Arlene Cherry-Sturdivant is an aspiring actor, professional vocalist, and band leader. Growing up in East Orange, New Jersey, in a time when music and art was still taught in schools and in church (St. Luke Church of Christ DOC), Letrice honed her creative skills in various ensembles and choirs at an early age. Letrice recently had the honor of playing **Geraldine "Mama" Winter** in the 40th Anniversary production of **"MAMA I WANT TO SING" The Musical** presented by **Mama Foundation for the Arts** (February – March 2023). As a professional vocalist, Letrice works

with many bands/ensembles including her own R&B dance band called **"The LV Project Band"** co-founded with her husband Victor Wise (Drummer /Musical Director).

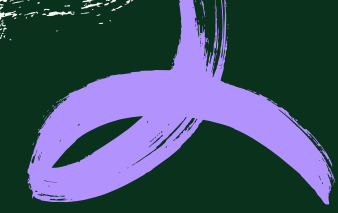
From September to November 2016, Letrice performed seven nights a week on Bahamas Paradise Grand Celebration Cruise Ship with Saxophonist Thomas Hutchings, as the Saxophone/Vocal duo, **"Sax at Night"**. Letrice has made her mark in the recording studio as well, creating her latest single, **"Nothing in Life is Free"** on her self-titled EP. As a founding member of the **"Let's Go Back Tour"** (October 2009), under the direction of the late Daniel "D.A." Atherton, she performed with such greats as, Meli'sa Morgan, Bobby Brown, Alyson Williams, Christopher Williams, and Jeff Redd, to name a few. Letrice lives in New York. She is a faithful member of Harlem's New Light Baptist Church NYC/The Bobby Lewis Ensemble, enjoys being a part of the live music scene, making new friends, all while adding to her fan-base.

REEL SISTERS AWARDS 2023 Honorees

REEL SISTERS TRAILBLAZER
HONOREE

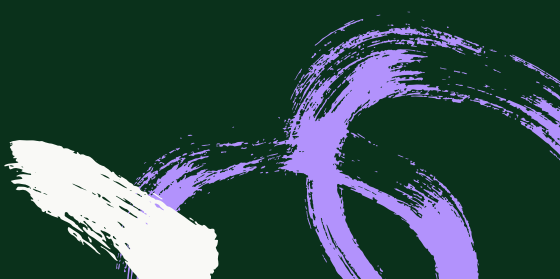


Dawn Porter
Filmmaker



Dawn Porter is an American documentary filmmaker and the founder of the production company Trilogy Films. Her award-winning films include **Gideon's Army (2013)**, about three black public defenders working in the southern United States; **Spies of Mississippi (2014)**, about the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission (MSSC) efforts to preserve segregation during the 50s and 60s, **Trapped**, about the impact of anti-abortion laws on abortion providers in the South, and **Bobby Kennedy for President**, which debuted on **Netflix**. As a two-time Sundance film festival director, Porter's work has been featured on **HBO, Netflix, CNN, PBS, MSNBC, MTV Films**, and other platforms.

Porter's latest documentary, **"The Lady Bird Diaries,"** an all-archival documentary about Lady Bird Johnson, debuted at the 2023 SXSW Film Festival, where it won the Lone Star Prize. Her next project, entitled **"Deadlocked: How America Shaped the Supreme Court,"** a four-part docuseries, explores the history of the Supreme Court, the justices, decisions, and confirmation battles that have shaped the United States. The series will premiere on **Paramount/Showtime on September 22nd**. Other current projects include directing the MGM documentary **"Cirque Du Soleil: Without a Net"** which was a centerpiece at the 2022 DOC NYC Festival, and directing/executive producing a 6-part series on the continuation of the historic civil rights documentary series **"Eyes on the Prize"** for HBO. Additional credits include **"The Me You Can't See"** (Apple TV+), **"Rise Again: Tulsa and the Red Summer"** (National Geographic), **"The Way I See It"** (Focus Features), **"John Lewis: Good Trouble"** (CNN, Magnolia Pictures), **"37 Words"** (ESPN), **"Un(re)solved"** (Frontline PBS), and **"Gideon's Army"** (HBO).



REEL SISTERS TRAILBLAZER
HONOREE



Sabrina
Schmidt Gordon
Filmmaker

Sabrina Schmidt Gordon is an award-winning Haitian-American documentary filmmaker and impact strategist from NYC. Her films employ provocative, nuanced storytelling to center marginalized voices, illuminate diverse experiences, and explore the issues that affect our global society. Since her Emmy-winning editing debut for GBH, she has distinguished herself as a producer, editor, and director. She is a **Women at Sundance Fellow**, **Dear Producer Award winner**, recognizing excellence in independent filmmaking, and a member of **The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences**. Sabrina's recent films include **Victim/Suspect (Netflix)**, which premiered this year at the **Sundance Film Festival**, an investigative documentary following a journalist who uncovers a shocking pattern about the police handling of sexual assault cases; and **To the End (Hulu)** on Variety's list of "**Films to watch at Sundance**," which follows four young women of color leaders, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, on the front lines of the fight for the most sweeping climate change legislation in U.S. history.

Sabrina is the producer of critically-acclaimed Sundance film **QUEST (PBS|POV)**, a portrait of a North Philadelphia family for which she was nominated for an **Independent Spirit Award**, a **Peabody**, and two **Emmys**. A **New York Times Critic's Pick** and **Rolling Stone Top 10 Films of the Year**, Sabrina is featured in VOGUE magazine's, **QUEST: a Documentary Disrupts American Narratives About Race**. Sabrina's directing debut was the Emmy-nominated **BaddDDD Sonia Sanchez (PBS)**, which she co-directed, co-produced and edited, winning **Best Film Directed by a Woman of Color** at the **African Diaspora Film Festival**. She is the co-producer and editor of many films including **Documented (CNN)**, which had record viewership and was nominated for the **NAACP Image Award** for Best Documentary; **Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes**; and **Mrs. Goundo's Daughter**. Other credits include the award-winning films **Belly of the Beast**, **Cusp**, **Team Dream**, **Meltdown in Dixie**, **Cooked**, **Wilhelmina's War**, and **The New Black**. Sabrina is also an industry fieldbuilder, supporting the work and careers of filmmakers of African descent as Chair of the **Black Documentary Collective**, a founding member of **Beyond Inclusion** advancing equity in the documentary film industry, and a sought after speaker, panelist, juror and mentor.

For more information on Sabrina, please visit www.vespertinefilms.com.

MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES



Shelia Kay Davis

Founder/Art Director
of New Professional Theatre

Sheila Kay Davis, founder/artistic director of New Professional Theatre, is a lifelong theatre professional. After graduating from Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga. with a degree in theatre, Sheila headed to New York City. She was immediately cast in the hit show "**Little Shop of Horrors**", now a classic, in which Sheila originated the role of Ronette. She is featured on the cast album and played the role for five years. She hit the ground running racking up success in television commercials, regional theatres, and daytime dramas. However, she noticed very few minorities having real sustainable success in the theatre world. Her thorough experience as an actress gave her insight into both the joys and frustrations of minority artists. She used this insight as her drive to found the **New Professional Theatre (NPT)**. Armed with passion and desire, Ms. Davis set out to form a theatre company that would develop African American playwrights, a sorely underrepresented group.

Since its inception, NPT has served over 1000 playwrights with productions, cash grants, dramaturgy, business seminars and providing access to agents and producers. New Professional Theatre is the only African American theatre company located in the Broadway theatre district. NPT writers have been featured in regional theatre, television, and film. Sheila is the daughter of Carrie Meek, the first African American elected to the US Congress in the state of Florida since Reconstruction. Sheila understands developing constituencies and community mobilization. She serves her community through the NPT Education Program a program that provides mentoring, homework assistance, college prep, volunteerism and Broadway outings to New York City Public School Students. She also chairs the **Arts Ministry at Antioch Baptist Church**. She has received the **Spelman College Alumnae Achievement Award for Arts & Media** and the **Arts Leadership Award** from the **Coalition of 100 Black/Asian/Latino women** at the **World of Women Leaders**.

FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



Candace D. Patrick

Writer, Director, Producer

Candace D. Patrick is a writer, director, and producer who was born and raised in Los Angeles, CA. She first became passionate about screenwriting in high school after her drama teacher encouraged her to apply to the Scriptwriters Network High School Fellowship Program, of which she was accepted. Participating in that fellowship led her to earn a Screenwriting degree from **Loyola Marymount University**, where she developed her voice focusing on stories that authentically displayed human journeys. Having had the opportunity to travel to 25+ countries while working as a marketing director for Semester at Sea, a study abroad program, Candace learned that the feeling of joy is universal, but the path to joy and healing are uniquely traveled and often include laughter. Her writing often explores grief & healing, mental health and finding joy, and debunking the Strong Black Woman concept. She earned semifinalist rankings for her first feature, "**Glow**," in the 2010 StoryPros contest, and the 2017 Screencraft Film Fund for her short script, "**Cycle**." In 2019, she wrote, directed, and produced the short film, "**The 5th Room**," which received awards and nominations for **Best Short**, **Best Writer**, and **Best Director**. Since then she has worked on several independent film and web projects. Her 1-hour family drama pilot, "**Harrington's Crossing**," advanced to the finalist round of the Spring 2021 WeScreenplay Diverse Voices competition. When not writing, Candace loves to travel, and fight with her cat, Nougat, for the most comfortable seat in her apartment.

Micro Budget Fellow Statement:

I am extremely honored and grateful to have been selected as an awardee for the Reel Sisters Micro Budget Film Fellowship Program! Being an independent filmmaker comes with many challenges, and having financial support tends to land right at the top of that list of battles to overcome. Receiving this grant and having the support of mentorship over this next year will make all the difference in taking this vulnerable story I wrote and seeing it on film. This film is inspired by and dedicated to my father, whom I lost at age 11 due to stomach cancer. **"Finding JaMia's Spirit"** aims to challenge conventional narratives surrounding grief, particularly in the context of children's understanding and processing of loss, and I hope it will resonate with children, families, and individuals who have experienced loss and are now on their healing journey. Thank you so much to Reel Sisters for supporting me and our production team on this filmmaking journey!

Finding JaMia's Spirit

A little girl looks for her dad's ancestor spirit.

FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



Eboni Price

Filmmaker

World Premiere for *Hard* written and directed by Eboni Price!

Eboni Price found her passion for filmmaking as a teenager in Birmingham, AL. She directed her first short film at the age of 17 through a program designed at teaching Black children in the south filmmaking. Now a director/writer based in Los Angeles, CA she aims to bring authentic and profound stories of Black women to the forefront of her lens. Currently working at Shondaland, Eboni's previous work includes projects under **Bad Robot**, **Legendary Pictures** and **BET Productions**. In 2020, she was named a Finalist in the **Sidewalk Film Festival** for her script "**Pandemonium**", chronicling the effects of Covid on Black families and has had other work featured in **Reel Sisters Film Festival**, **HuffPost**, **Shadow & Act**, and **Black Enterprise**. Her 2016 web series, **#Adulting**, was named a **semi-finalist** in **Los Angeles Cinefest** and is now streaming nationwide on Tubi.

Her short film, **“Hard”** is also the recipient of the 2022 Reel Sisters Film Festival Micro-budget Fellowship grant and will be premiering in 2023. Eboni has also recently completed her feature directorial debut with a film called **“Free”** starring Wendy Raquel Robinson, Clifton Powell and Imani Lewis. In 2022, Eboni was selected as a director’s shadow for the upcoming series **Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story** filmed in London, UK. She is also a graduate of Netflix’s Original Series Director Program. Eboni is a **Howard University Alumna** in which she received her B.A. in Film Production.

HARD



Director/Writer: Eboni Price

Producers: Lauren E. Banks, Kristofer Cross, Dot McDonald and Musau Onwubiko.

Narrative, 28 min.

Twelve-year-old Javonte is currently struggling with the woes of puberty. She’s being bullied, she doesn’t think she fits in, her home life’s a mess and on top of that, she’s still grappling with the loss of her brother. We open on her fighting her bully, Imani and losing in front of her entire neighborhood. What path will Javonte take in life — will she overcome her challenges or crumble under the weight of being “hard”?

FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



Morgan Alicia Smith Filmmaker

Morgan Alicia Smith is a New York based filmmaker who has spent her lifetime in love with film, television, and theatre. After directing her first play at age 17, Morgan earned her undergraduate degree in **Geology** while also getting minors in Music and Theater. She found ways to keep her passions for storytelling alive by writing and producing stories for **Milwaukee PBS**, and broadcast news in Wisconsin and Texas. Morgan's path took a circuitous route when she found herself creating animated/graphical content, and running the in-game entertainment efforts for the **Texas Stars**, a minor league hockey team in Austin. Still, Morgan made time for her personal creative endeavors by writing plays for local festivals. She even wrote and performed a one-woman show, which took her to the finals of a fringe play competition. But when COVID hit and she was laid off from her job, Morgan took a chance at school again, and found herself in **Columbia University's Creative Film Producing MFA program**. Morgan hopes to put her degree to work telling stories about women, and for women who are underrepresented in mainstream media

Micro Budget Fellowship Statement

I am beyond grateful that Reel Sisters exists as a resource for artists like me. Being chosen as a Reel Sisters Fellow is an incredible opportunity, and a leap toward making my thesis film, which seeks to honor women who dare to dream in a world that too-often encourages them to give up. Reel Sisters actively offers a helping-hand that converts hopes into reality, and I am humbled and honored to be included.

FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



Vivienne Shaw

Filmmaker

Vivienne Shaw is a Taiwanese-American screenwriter and director currently pursuing her **MFA in screenwriting** from **Columbia University**. She works primarily in comedy and horror with particular interest in Asian-American, queer, and female-centered stories. Vivienne is the recent recipient of an **Alfred P. Sloan Screenplay Grant** and a current **Sloan Grand Jury Prize** nominee for her psychological thriller feature script **KILLING JAR**. In addition to her own projects she has worked in development at multiple production companies, including **ViacomCBS**, **Cinetic Media** and **Gamechanger Films**, and has also served as a script reader for the former **Sundance Asian-American** Fellowship. Outside of film Vivienne also works in video art and projection design for theater, pursuing her continued interest in interactive storytelling. She received her **BA** from **Wellesley College** in computer science and cinema and media studies.

Micro Budget Fellow Statement:

I'm so grateful to have been selected as a Reel Sisters Microbudget Fellow for my short film "30 Hour Famine", a passion project I've been developing for the past year. It's incredibly exciting to know that Reel Sisters believes in this story and the comedic lens with which it's told, and the much-needed funding and support will go a long way in helping this film get from script to screen. Enormous thanks to Reel Sisters and African Voices for continuing to invest in female POC filmmakers.

30 Hour Famine

ELECTED OFFICIALS



Crystal Hudson Council Member

Crystal Hudson is the Council Member for **New York City's District 35** in Brooklyn, representing the neighborhoods of Prospect Heights, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, and parts of Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant. She was elected in 2021 and made history as one of the first out gay Black women ever elected in New York City. Crystal is a community organizer and public servant committed to making government more accessible for more people and delivering a just recovery for all New Yorkers in the wake of a global pandemic, economic crisis, and racial reckoning.

Her commitment to public service is personal and began when her mother started exhibiting signs of what would later be diagnosed as Alzheimer's disease. As the only child of a single mother, Crystal quickly became the primary caregiver for her mother. She experienced first-hand how difficult it is for working families to navigate complex, bureaucratic systems and access services and resources needed to keep older New Yorkers safe and healthy at home, where they can age in place and maintain their dignity. Crystal is a fierce advocate for seniors and families impacted by Alzheimer's disease and is unwavering in her commitment to serving families who are caring for loved ones.

Before entering public service, Crystal spent more than a decade working in marketing and advertising -- first with the **WNBA's Washington Mystics** and **NBA's Washington Wizards** and then at **Amtrak**, where she managed a portfolio of sports, entertainment and multicultural marketing campaigns for the nation's passenger rail service. In this capacity, Crystal led an effort to further diversify Amtrak's advertising and fought for the inclusion of marginalized communities in national advertising campaigns. Once she entered public service, Crystal served as **Co-Director** of the **Community Outreach Unit** at the New York City Council, **First Deputy Public Advocate of Community Engagement** at the **Office of the Public Advocate**, and **Chief of Operations** to the **Majority Leader of the City Council**.

ELECTED OFFICIALS



Farah N. Louis

Council Member

Farah N. Louis is a first-generation Brooklynite who was raised in an immigrant and pro-union household — an experience that later propelled her into advocacy, community organizing, and ultimately a career in public service.

After nearly six years of service as a staffer, Louis ran in the special election to fill the **45th Council District seat** after it was vacated by former Council Member Jumaane D. Williams. She won the election with 42 percent of the votes following six contentious weeks of campaigning.

In 2019, Council Member Louis became the first woman to represent the 45th District, which comprises Flatbush, East Flatbush, Midwood, Marine Park, Flatlands, and Kensington in Brooklyn, NY.

During her first term in office, Council Member Louis rolled out an ambitious agenda and spearheaded critical legislation to protect survivors of domestic violence; close the food insecurity gap; expand access to nonprofit services, education, reproductive rights, and healthcare.

She was **re-elected in 2021** for a second term in office. Louis is a member of the committees on **Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations; Education; Finance; Land Use; Transportation and Infrastructure;** and Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. In January 2022, she was appointed as Chair of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings, and Maritime Uses. One month later, she was re-elected as **Co-Chair** of the **Women's Caucus** and then elected as **Co-Chair** of the **Brooklyn Delegation**. Council Member Louis is also a member of the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus as well as the Progressive Caucus.

REEL SISTERS OF THE DIASPORA

This festival's winning short films may
qualify for consideration for the

OSCARS[®]



ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Oscars.org/Rules

Reel Sisters Film Festival

Brooklyn Dates:

Oct. 21-22, 2023 @City Tech

Harlem Dates:

Reel Sisters & While We Are Still Here
celebrates Harlem

Oct. 28, 2023 @Miller Theatre

Oct. 28, 2023 @ Maysles Documentary
Center

For film schedule visit: www.reelsisters.org



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