

Kashif Launches \$75K+ Short Film Production Award as Opportunities Shrink for Filmmakers Shut Out of Hollywood

#OscarsSoWhite Creator April Reign, 'The Chi' Star Yolonda Ross, Director Gail Maurice, and Filmmaker Isabel Sandoval Join Jury as Five Finalists Prepare to Pitch Live in Brooklyn on August 28



New York City, New York Aug 27, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - As emerging filmmakers face an increasingly difficult path from screenplay to screen, film incubator and production organization Kashif is putting more than \$75,000 in production resources behind one emerging filmmaker's work through its inaugural Screenplay for the People, a new program designed to move a winning short screenplay directly into production.

Eight emerging writers selected for the inaugural program will each receive a \$2,000 unrestricted award, with five finalists advancing to a live pitch competition on Friday, August 28 at Brooklyn's historic Weeksville Heritage Center. The winning screenplay will move directly into production, with Kashif executive producing the short film from development through completion beginning in 2027.

The finalists will pitch before a jury spanning film, television, culture and advocacy, including April Reign, creator of #OscarsSoWhite and a leading advocate for equity in entertainment; Yolonda Ross, actor, writer and director known for *The Chi*, *The Get Down* and *How to Get Away with Murder*; acclaimed filmmaker Isabel Sandoval, whose work includes *Lingua Franca* and *Moonglow*; actor and filmmaker Gail Maurice, known for *Ancestral Beats* and *Rosie*; and Kashif founder and filmmaker Chanelle Elaine, an artist and cultural strategist working at the intersection of storytelling and social transformation, whose credits include *First Match* and *Rebel Music*. Performer and cultural personality Milan Garçon will host the evening.

While many programs focus on development, Screenplay for the People is built around one of the industry's most persistent barriers: getting the work made. Kashif will provide the winning filmmaker with a full production package valued at more than \$75,000, taking the selected screenplay through production rather than requiring the filmmaker to independently secure the financing and infrastructure needed to bring the project to screen.

"Talent has never been the problem. The problem is everything around the talent: the money, access,

mentorship, time and permission to take a real creative risk,” said Chanelle Elaine, founder of Kashif. “Kashif exists to build the conditions where emerging storytellers can make their work, not just develop it. We’ve proven what’s possible with a fraction of what these artists deserve. Imagine what happens when the resources finally meet the vision.”

For Elaine, a queer Black feminist filmmaker and activist, Screenplay for the People reflects a broader effort to challenge an industry model in which calls for greater representation have not always translated into sustained resources, creative control or pathways to production for filmmakers historically excluded from the system.

Kashif works across race, gender, sexuality, and ability to provide filmmakers with not only creative development but also practical resources that can determine whether participation is possible at all. Its programs are offered at no cost to artists, with support that can include transportation, food, childcare and equipment.

Screenplay for the People joins The Brownsville Initiative, Writing Dope Shorts and Making Dope Shorts within Kashif’s growing ecosystem for independent filmmakers. Together, the programs are designed to create a pathway from creative development to production and give emerging storytellers greater opportunity to bring their own work to audiences.

That model has also extended beyond production. Kashif’s *Beyond Survival* tells the story of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people who organized to pass New York’s first-in-the-nation Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act. Through the film’s impact campaign, Kashif says the project helped support efforts to advance similar legislation in two additional states, with efforts underway in 19 others.

The August 28 live pitch will take place from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM ET at Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn. Sponsors include Final Draft, Gotham NYC and the Wolf Baumer Fund in The New York Community Trust.

ABOUT KASHIF

Kashif is a film incubation, financing and production organization forging new creative and economic pathways in content creation. Committed to developing, financing and producing stories with BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, gender non-conforming and disabled filmmakers, Kashif is building an enduring ecosystem that centers artistic sovereignty, values-driven organizational models and climate-conscious practices. Learn more at wearekashif.com.

Media Contact

Fan of Your Brand

*****@skaibluedmedia.com

Source : Kashif Incubator

[See on IssueWire](#)