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The Honorable Tennille McCoy, Assemblywoman, NJ Legislature, 14th Congressional District and The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) Presents the *Second Annual Filming in the Garden State*, during the 24th Annual Run & Shoot Filmworks Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival, on August 13th in Martha's Vineyard, MA.

TRENTON, NJ — July 16, 2026. The Honorable Tennille McCoy, Assemblywoman, NJ legislature, 14th congressional district and the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) presents the ***Second Annual Filming in the Garden State (FIGS)*,** during the 24th Annual Run & Shoot Filmworks Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival, on August 13th from 3 pm – 6 pm, in Martha's Vineyard, MA.

The second annual FIGS at the African American Film Festival in Martha's Vineyard, will highlight New Jersey's Groundbreaking Film and Television Tax Credit Program. The program helps to strengthen the State's economy by attracting film, television, and digital media production, as well as the associated economic benefit that is generated through these productions, such as permanent job creation, decent living wages, increased tourism activity and spending, infrastructure and community investment in production facilities, support for local small businesses and vendors, and the expected surge in value from media exposure. **FIGS will demonstrate how New Jersey fosters diverse storytelling and drives economic growth through innovative production support**.

"This initiative isn't about catching a trend, it's about setting a standard," said **Assemblywoman Tennille R. McCoy**. "New Jersey has the tools, the talent, and the tenacity to lead in film and media. We're putting our people first and making sure opportunity follows.

"On behalf of the Board of Directors, Staff and Members of the African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ and the over 124,000 black owned NJ, businesses, we are honored to co-host and sponsor the Second Annual Filming in the Garden State (FIGS) at the 24th Annual Celebration of the best of Black Cinema at the prestigious Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival (MVAAFF)," said **Dr. John E. Harmon**, Sr., IOM, Founder, President and CEO of AACCNJ.

“New Jersey’s film industry is on the rise, bringing new investments and good-paying jobs to the state,” **said NJEDA Chief Equity and Inclusive Culture Officer Michelle Bodden.** “Major studios and productions have chosen New Jersey to set up shop because of our diverse and talented workforce, varied landscapes, and strong incentive program. Governor Mikie Sherrill is committed to supporting this emerging industry and ensuring residents and small businesses in every zip code of the state benefit from its economic impact.”

“Universities are engines of talent, innovation, and economic opportunity. As New Jersey's creative economy continues to grow, higher education must prepare students with the skills, experiences, and industry connections that lead to meaningful careers”, said Dr. Lamont O. Repollet, President, Kean University. “Kean University is proud to support *Filming in the Garden State* because partnerships between higher education and industry create stronger workforce pipelines, expand opportunity, and fuel economic growth. When we invest in our students, we invest in the future of New Jersey."

Set against the global backdrop of the festival, this event underscores New Jersey’s commitment to amplifying underrepresented voices and generating a lasting economic impact. It offers press and industry professionals a unique perspective on how the state is shaping a more inclusive and innovative future for film and television.

The event will feature a panel discussion with representatives from the NJEDA, and a fireside chat moderated by Assemblywoman McCoy, and will feature the following distinguished speakers, **Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., Dr. Dale Caldwell, Lieutenant Governor, & NJ Secretary of State and Dr. Lamont Repollet, President, Kean University.**

The event will conclude with a star studded awards presentation, recognizing those whose work has shaped the cultural and economic landscape of New Jersey and beyond.

A.J. Calloway is an entertainment reporter recognized for his work covering music, film, television, and popular culture. He gained national attention as the original host of BET’s 106 & Park, where he co-hosted alongside Marie “Free” Wright from 2000 to 2005 and interviewed some of the biggest artists and entertainers of the era. Calloway later joined Extra as a correspondent and co-host, covering major red-carpet events, celebrity interviews, and entertainment news for more than a decade. A graduate of Saint Benedict’s Prep in Newark, New Jersey, and Howard University, Calloway has built a career connecting audiences with influential figures across the entertainment industry.

Chris Charles Scott is the co-founder and Head of Documentaries at Strategery Films. After beginning his career in politics, serving with Congressman Chet Edwards, Obama for America, and Senator Harry Reid's successful 2010 re-election campaign, he transitioned to documentary filmmaking. His acclaimed works include The Shape of Shreveport, named Documentary of the Year by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, What About Waco, winner of the Deep in the Heart of Texas Film Festival's Grand Jury Prize, and Class Action Park, a hit HBO Max documentary featured in The New York Times. A Baylor University graduate in Political Science, Scott also attended seminary at Princeton and is active in community service in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Naturi Naughton-Lewis is an actress, singer, and executive producer from East Orange, New Jersey, whose career spans music, film, and television. She first gained national recognition as a member of the platinum-selling R&B group 3LW before transitioning to acting with standout performances as Lil’ Kim in Notorious and Denise in Fame. She went on to portray Tasha St. Patrick throughout STARZ’s Power franchise, a role that earned her an NAACP Image Award and established her as one of the series’ defining performers. In addition to her work on screen, Naughton-Lewis has expanded into producing, serving as an executive producer on STARZ’s The Nowhere Man, in which she

also stars. Her credits also include ABC's Queens, BET+'s Call Her King, NBC's The Playboy Club, and Lifetime's The Client List, reflecting a career that has spanned more than two decades across film, television, and Music.

Registration is complementary and is available through the following link:
https://mms.aaccnj.com/members/evr/reg_main.php?orgcode=AANJ&evid=103719373
Lead sponsor for the second consecutive year is the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA). Kean University and AACCNJ are also 2026 FIGS sponsors.

Stephanie and Floyd Rance, co-founders of the Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival (MVAAFF), were presented at the 2025 event with the Cinematic Trailblazers Award in recognition of their visionary leadership in creating one of the nation's premier platforms for Black storytelling.
The co-founders were recently honored in February with the Excellence in Culture Award at the AACCNJ 16th Annual Circle of Achievement Awards Gala, at the Venetian in Garfield, NJ during Black History Month.

About Assemblywoman Tennille McCoy
Assemblywoman McCoy is a leader known for turning vision into action. A former Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Labor and a respected HR executive, McCoy brings unmatched expertise in curating talent pipelines not only to jobs but to long-term community wealth.

About the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey
The AACCNJ performs an essential role in the economic viability of New Jersey. While providing a platform for New Jersey's African American business leaders, to speak with a collective voice, the AACCNJ advocates and promotes economic diversity fostering a climate of business growth through major initiatives centering on education and public policy. The Chamber serves as a proactive advocacy group with a 501(c) 3 tax exemption, which is shared by the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

About the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)
The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) **serves** as the State's principal agency for driving economic growth and administers the Film and Digital Media Tax Credit Program. The program helps to strengthen the State's economy by attracting film, television, and digital media production, as well as the associated economic benefit that is generated through these productions, such as permanent job creation, decent living wages, increased tourism activity and spending, infrastructure and community investment in production facilities, support for local small businesses and vendors, and the expected surge in value from media exposure.