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# “Soul Tie” Brings Afro-Latina Romance to NFMLA Black Cinema Showcase

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Feb 10, 2025, 08:00am EST

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Lead characters, Melrisa and Saeed, played by Adargiza De Los Santos and Jerrell Pippens HUDSON PHILMORE PRODUCTIONS

Los Angeles is set to welcome the highly anticipated premiere of *Soul Tie*, an award-winning short film by [Maegan La Trese Philmore](#), at the [NewFilmmakers LA Black Cinema Showcase](#) on February 22, 2025, at 5:30 PM. The film has already made waves on the festival circuit, offering a raw and intimate portrait of human connection amid the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## An Unconventional Love Story

At its heart, *Soul Tie* is a 15-minute romantic drama that follows Melrisa, (Adargiza De Los Santos) a middle-aged Afro-Latina American and successful political podcaster, as she reconnects with Saeed, (Jerrell Pippens) a man from her past who previously disappeared from her life. Set during Los Angeles’ lockdown, the story unfolds in a world increasingly defined by isolation and uncertainty. As the two form a small yet deeply personal quarantine bubble, Melrisa is forced to confront her own vulnerabilities, emotional hunger, and the unexpected ways companionship can offer renewal—even when it’s fleeting.



Saeed and Melrisa HUDSON PHILMORE PRODUCTIONS

The film’s logline captures its essence: “An Afro-Latina rekindles a fling and finds revitalizing energy overcoming COVID-19’s isolation and its lockdown’s racial opportunistic zeitgeist.” Rather than following Hollywood’s formulaic romance structure, *Soul Tie* explores a relationship often overlooked on screen—one that isn’t defined by struggle or heartbreak, but by the quiet, necessary act of seeking connection in a time of collective uncertainty.

## Redefining Who Gets to Be Seen

Philmore, an outspoken advocate for womanist, queer, and BIPOC storytelling, created *Soul Tie* with a clear mission: to expand the narrow lens through which Black and Afro-Latina women—particularly dark-skinned, plus-sized women—are represented in media. A 2023 study by USC’s Annenberg Inclusion Initiative found that out of 1,600 top-grossing films from 2007 to 2022, only eight featured an Afro-Latino actor in a lead or co-lead role, accounting for less than 1% of such roles. This stark underrepresentation exists despite approximately 6 million adults in the U.S. identifying as Afro-Latino in 2020, making up 12% of the adult Latino population.



“Soul Tie” Director, Producer, and Writer Maegan La Trese Philmore SARAH MORALES

“Melrisa is a single, middle-aged, dark-skinned, plus-size, child-free Afro-Latina American with an Afro—and she needs to be *seen*,” Philmore explains. “Large, dark female bodies need to be shown being adored.”

This commitment to authentic storytelling is embodied in the film’s star, [Adargiza De Los Santos](#), a Dominican-American actress whose work spans *Abbott Elementary*, *The Horror of Dolores Roach*, *Grey’s Anatomy*, and *This Is Us*.

## A Cinematic and Sonic Experience

Visually, *Soul Tie* pays homage to 1970s cinema, reflecting Melrisa’s Gen X sensibilities. Philmore and her team relied on Elite Anamorphic Primes and Schneider Cine Xenar glass to achieve a warm, filmic quality reminiscent of classic love stories, while also emphasizing the surreal nature of life in lockdown-era Los Angeles. The film’s design choices—costuming, set decoration, and lighting—aren’t just aesthetic; they act as an extension of Melrisa’s interior world, reinforcing her identity and the heightened reality she inhabits. Music also plays a pivotal role, with an original score by Yuki Kanesaka serving as an emotional throughline. Each note reflects Melrisa’s evolving state of mind, allowing audiences to feel the push and pull of her emotions beyond dialogue alone.



The Afro-Latino Short Film Competition First Place Winner HUDSON PHILMORE PRODUCTIONS

## A Film Already Turning Heads

Since its debut, *Soul Tie* has been met with critical acclaim, winning first place in the [AAFCA/LEJA Afro-Latino Short Film Remix Competition](#) and screening at major festivals like the [Afro Latino Film Festival](#) and [The Dominican Film Festival](#) in NYC. Now, its Los Angeles premiere at [NewFilmmakers LA’s InFocus: Black Cinema](#) program offers another opportunity to highlight its significance. The showcase spotlights Black filmmakers whose work pushes boundaries, making *Soul Tie* a standout selection.

## The Creative Force Behind Soul Tie

The film was brought to life by a team of industry veterans, including:

- [Maegan La Trese Philmore](#) – Director, Producer, Writer
- [Adargiza De Los Santos](#) – Lead Actress (*Abbott Elementary*, *The Horror of Dolores Roach*)
- [Jerrell Pippens](#) – Lead Actor (*Murder in the First*, *Daddy’s Day*)
- [Cristina Sasso](#) – Producer
- [Nasreen Alkhateeb](#) – Director of Photography
- [Andrey Negron](#) – Editor and Colorist
- [Yuki Kanesaka](#) – Composer

Philmore, who founded the production company Hudson Philmore, has built a career championing stories that Hollywood often sidelines. With experience overseeing productions for Comedy Central, VH1, MTV, YouTube Originals, and the NFL, as well as work on *Naked and Afraid* and the three-time Emmy-winning *Freedom Riders*, she brings a sharp creative vision to her projects.

## Beyond the Premiere

As *Soul Tie* takes the big screen in Los Angeles, it invites conversations about love, identity, and representation. The film is both a reflection of the world those in the margins have lived through and a challenge to the industry’s rigid beauty standards and storytelling norms. “I wanted to create a non-Hollywood romantic ending,” Philmore notes. “A situationship that isn’t about struggle or unrequited love—just real, human connection.”

For those eager to experience this groundbreaking film, [tickets](#) and event details are available via [NewFilmmakers LA](#). With its bold perspective, compelling performances, and rich cinematic language, *Soul Tie* isn’t just a film—it’s a necessary shift in how love, Blackness, and womanhood are portrayed on screen.

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