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OTV's Founder first feature-film is a meditation on Black Queer Love and the Pursuit of Joy

THANDO follows a South African Black queer couple fall in and out of reality, love and more.

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA - **THANDO** opens with a quote by the beloved writer, **James Baldwin: "Love him and let him love you. Do you think anything else under heaven really matters?"** From the self-proclaimed "popstar" and Co-Founder of the Emmy-nominated web TV platform [OTV - Open Television](#), Elijah McKinnon comes [THANDO](#). The upcoming feature-length film examines the ways Black Queer love manifests in a society steeped in shame, masculinity and homophobia. It will make its debut at a soon-to-be announced international film festival this summer.

THANDO is a love letter filled with affirmations for Black LGBTQ+ people all over the world that continue to be misrepresented in mainstream media, under attack in their own bodies and forced to wear a cloak of shame. Through this film, directed by the South African award-winning Director, [Twiggy Matiwana](#) (*The Bicycle Man*), *THANDO* creates a portal for two queer, African lovers to co-exist in a world that is fueled by their pursuit of collective joy instead of shared traumas.

"Mainstream media and white supremacy have waged a war on Black love; a war whose casualties have impacted the ways in which Black LGBTQ+ people have had to internalize shame around their identity and desires," says McKinnon, writer and film creator. The film was produced in February 2020, before the onset of a global pandemic that has claimed the lives of over 2 million people, with a crew of all Black, LGBTQ+ identified individuals. It follows Reza, a non-binary performance artist from a township in Soweto and Mase, a writer struggling to understand his identity. Through their brief introduction they suddenly begin to reveal intimate vulnerabilities that both aren't prepared to confront. As they fall in and out of reality, both discover the endless opportunities to create uninhibited joy out of their past traumas.

“THANDO invites our viewers to look at the ways masculinity and hegemony have contributed to the erasure of Black LGBTQ+ love stories,” says Matiwana. “It also asks us to imagine a world where Black queer love is universally celebrated and protected.”

In observance and celebration of Black History Month, the cast and crew are hosting a limited time preview of the film on [Valentine's Day via OTV's recently launched app](#). This exclusive Director's cut will be livestreamed on Sunday, February 14 at 1 pm CT / 9pm SAST. Following the film will be a conversation on the power of universal Black LGBTQ+ love via Clubhouse, facilitated by Elijah McKinnon and co-hosted by Black LGBTQ+ couples from the United States; Germany, London, Kenya, South Africa and more. Additionally, McKinnon has partnered with [PrEP4Love](#), an internationally acclaimed HIV prevention campaign to host a weekly IG LIVE series during the month of February on “Black Love” featuring anti oppression consultant, [McKensie Mack](#); award-winning queer photographer, [Paul Octavious](#) and more. The full line-up of screenings and conversations for THANDO can be found at [thandofilm.com](#).

In a world that has weaponized Blackness and queerness, THANDO asks you to help manifest a world that celebrates black love, vulnerability and the pursuit of joy. For other questions, including press inquiries can be emailed to elijah@peoplewho.care.

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MORE ABOUT THANDO:

After Reza, a non-binary rising performing artist from a township in Soweto, begins to settle into Johannesburg when Mase, a writer struggling to understand his identity, unexpectedly arrives into his life. Through their brief introduction they suddenly begin to reveal intimate vulnerabilities that both aren't willing to confront. As they fall in and out of reality, both discover the endless opportunities to create uninhibited joy out of their past traumas. [THANDO](#) asks us to imagine a world where Black queer love is universally celebrated and protected. Join Reza and Mase on a cinematic meditation on black love, vulnerability and the pursuit of joy.

[Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [2021 Electronic Press Kit](#) | [Official Teaser](#)
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MORE ABOUT ELIJAH MCKINNON:

[Elijah McKinnon](#) (they/them) is an award-winning artist, entrepreneur and visionary from the future currently residing on planet earth. In addition to serving as the Founder and Creative Director of People Who Care, Inc. their Chicago-based consultancy and studio practice, Elijah is also the Co-Founder and Executive Director of intersectional web platform, OTV - Open Television and the Co-Founder and Development Director of project incubator and sliding scale venue, Reunion Chicago. In 2020 they were announced as a recipient of the prestigious New Leaders of Chicago award by the Field Foundation of Illinois and MacArthur Foundation. In 2019, Elijah was recognized in New City's Film 50 Issue as one of the Top 10 of 50 individuals changing the landscape of film in Chicago. In 2016 Elijah was named “Top 30 Under 30 LGBT People” in Chicago, Illinois by the Windy City Times and was invited to the inaugural African-American LGBTQ Education Summit at The White House.

MORE ABOUT OTV:

[OTV | OPEN TELEVISION](#) is a non-profit platform for intersectional television. They incubate, distribute and exhibit artists that commercial television networks and art institutions do not develop consistently: Artists who identify with multiple identities marginalized by the market and society. OTV experiments

with alternative ways to develop, produce and exhibit art and television. OTV programs center artistic expression, intersectionality, Chicago and digital networking.