

THE ST. LOUIS AMERICAN

Living It

UMSL to present Black International Film Festival

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Runs April 22-24 at Saint Louis Art Museum

The Center for International Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis will present the XXI Black International Film Festival from April 22 through 24 at the Saint Louis Art Museum.

Produced by Berlin-based Fountainhead Tanz Theatre, the festival will include documentary and narrative films from Africa and the African Diaspora. Films will be shown from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

"The festival is both educational and entertaining, and it provides people with a chance to see some first-class but, in many cases, overlooked films," said Niyi Coker, the E. Desmond Lee Endowed Professor for African/African-American Studies at UMSL and festival organizer.

After its St. Louis run, the festival will move to Paris (April 27 through 30) and Berlin (May 4 through 10).

Thirty-seven films will be screened at the Saint Louis Art Museum. Among the highlights are:

- * "Been Rich All My Life," a 2005 documentary directed by Sundance award-winner Heather Lyn MacDonald that follows the Silver Belles dance group
- * "Leimert Park: The Story of a Village in South Central Los Angeles," a 2005 documentary directed by Jeannette Lindsay that documents a group of artists and musicians who, in the wake of the 1992 Los Angeles riots, created an underground arts movement and transformed their community.
- * "As an Act of Protest," a 2002 narrative directed by Dennis Leroy Moore that is considered a cinematic essay on racism and its psychological effects
- * "Bastards of the Party," a 2004 documentary directed by Cle Sloan that chronologically documents the evolution of black gangs, including the Black Panther Party, Crips and Bloods, in Los Angeles.
- * "Soul Of Justice: Thelton Henderson's American Journey," a gripping story about one man's commitment to justice and human rights from the streets of East Los Angeles to the federal bench. Judge Henderson's commitment to human rights has led him to a 10-year effort to reform medical care within California prisons.
- * "Pardon Me Cleo, a Deathrow Tale," in which an inmate on death row reaches out to black youth before her execution through her artwork in her cell.
- * "Queens of Sound - a Herstory of Reggae and Dance Hall," which documents the long neglected female side of reggae and dance hall music in Jamaica.
- * "Scene Not Heard," featuring rare performance footage, music and interviews with artists such as Floetry, Bahamadia and Lady B in Philadelphia's underground hip-hop scene.



"Leimert Park: The Story of a Village in South Central Los Angeles" is one of the films featured in the XXI Black International Film Festival.

* "The Making of a President," which depicts the issues surrounding the Malawi elections 2004, when Malawi celebrated 10 years of democracy with its third general elections. The Brazilian reporter Mirella Domenich and the German filmmaker Hans-Christian Goertz witnessed the elections process in Malawi (a Southern African nation of 12 million people) from two months before the polling day up to the inauguration ceremony. More than a record for posterity, the movie represents a denunciation of many human rights violations which were barely covered by the local and international media.

"Giving out money is an African tradition," claims Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, once he is inquired about the fact that his party distributes money to the people during the political campaign. "The Making of a President" also captures the counting process, the protests against the outcome of the elections as well as the assault against one of the most important Malawian human rights activist, Emmie Chanika. The movie was used in a court case by Chanika as a proof of her harassment.

While Mutharika from the ruling alliance was sworn into office, Malawians were on the streets protesting against the outcome of the elections, a rare event in one of the most peaceful countries on the continent. At least six people, including a 10-year old girl, were reportedly killed by police officials. International observers concluded "serious anomalies" within the process and a series of human rights violations. However, nothing has been done to change the scenario. Malawi is one of the 12 poorest countries in the world, with more than 70 percent of its 12 million inhabitants living with less than \$1 per day.

Video tapes of the film in the local Chichewa language are currently being distributed for free to community leaders in Malawi by the local partner NGO Civil Liberties Committee. It screens Monday, April 24 at 1 p.m.

Tickets are \$8 per film (\$4 for museum members), \$25 for a full-day pass and \$50 for a full-festival pass. Tickets may be purchased at the festival or in advance by calling (314) 655-5299. For a complete schedule, visit www.cfis-umsl.com.