

Press Release



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NEWARK BLACK FILM FESTIVAL MARKS 40th ANNIVERSARY WITH LINE-UP OF STELLAR FILMS INCLUDING 2013 OSCAR WINNERS *12 YEARS A SLAVE* and *20 FEET FROM STARDOM*

Longest Running Cinema Genre Tribute made possible by Bank of America

NEWARK, NJ – The Newark Black Film Festival (NBFF), the longest-running black film festival in the United States, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year with a blockbuster lineup of films and documentaries, including winners of the biennial Paul Robeson Awards. This year's screenings include the 2013 Academy Award winners *12 Years a Slave* and *20 Feet From Stardom*, and a fun-filled schedule of youth films.

Since its introduction, the NBFF has provided a forum for writers, directors, producers, performers and film patrons who enjoy African American and African Diaspora cinema. The goal of the festival is to present programs that reflect the full diversity of the black experience both past and present, encompassing a wide range of forums and formulas from documentary to the avant-garde. In the past 39 years, NBFF has screened approximately 800 films to an audience of almost 180,000 adults and youth. Past films of note have included *Ashes and Embers*, *Body and Soul*, *Do the Right Thing* and *Daughters of the Dust*.

NBFF has brought to Newark luminaires such as the late Gordon Parks and Paul Robeson, Jr. and James Van Der Zee; and James Earl Jones, Danny Glover, Reggie and Warrington Hudlin, Ayoka Chenzira, Spike Lee, Pam Grier, Donald Bogle, Richard Wesley, Euzhan Palcy, Ava DuVernay and S. Epatha Merkerson to participate in post-screening discussions. Pat Faison, who has been with the festival since its inception and served as festival coordinator for the past 10 years, points to the intimate discussions between the audience and filmmakers as a unique aspect of NBFF.

The NBFF started in 1974 with a touring black film festival that was put together by filmmaker Oliver Franklin who worked at the Annenberg Center for Communication, Art & Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. The late Gus Henningburg, who was then the Executive Director of the Greater Newark Urban Coalition, learned about the festival and proposed it to the Newark Museum.

In 1976 when the touring festival was no longer available, the Museum made the decision to produce the Newark Black Film Festival and established a Selection Committee, whose volunteer members represented important institutions in the community.

In 1981, a Children's Festival was added, which is now called Youth Cinema. In 1985, the Museum initiated the Paul Robeson Awards to honor excellence in independent filmmaking in five categories.

"When we introduced the festival, few black filmmakers were successful in bringing their projects to the screen and those that made it, didn't stay long," said NBFF Chair Gloria Hopkins Buck, a charter member of the festival. "The founders were sensitive to the need for creative expression and we did our best to make it happen. Challenges still exist but the quality of work and their artistic accomplishments on a global scale are changing the landscape."

"NBFF is a festival unique for its longevity," said Rutgers professor and historian Dr. Clement Price, also a charter member, "and the endearment in which it is held by patrons of more than a generation. It is also civic ritual that has witnessed the emergence of black film as a genre important to understanding multiple narratives about the human spirit."

Warrington Hudlin, President, Black Filmmaker Foundation said, "The NBFF came into existence to fill the void left by movie theaters that were fleeing Newark and other inner cities throughout the United States. The real beneficiaries soon became the newly minted generation of young African American filmmakers who were graduating from film schools with films under their arms and looking for a place to screen them. And even today, if a filmmaker wants to put his or her film to a litmus test for authenticity, I say 'screen it in Newark'."

Financial support for the festival from Bank of America for the past 14 years has allowed it to expand to venues beyond the museum, including NJ State Museum/Trenton, Rutgers/Camden and Monmouth Arts Council/Asbury Park.

"As the longest-running event of its kind in the U.S., the Newark Black Film Festival never fails to bring an impressive lineup of movies to the Newark area and beyond," said Bob Doherty, Bank of America New Jersey president. "Celebrating differences in culture, ethnicity and experience serves to create stronger, more vibrant communities."

The 2014 NBFF season will begin on June 25 at the Museum with the documentary *Freedom Riders*. On July 2, the Museum will screen *20 Feet From Stardom*. *12 Years a Slave* will be shown July 9 at CityPlex 12 Theatre. The film *Big Words*, will be shown on July 16 and *Moms Mabley: I Got Somethin' to Tell You* will be screened July 23.

Winners of the 2014 Paul Robeson Awards will be honored at an award ceremony on July 30 at the Museum followed by the screenings at CityPlex 12 Theatre. Youth Cinema feature films will be screened both at the Museum and the Newark Public Library in July and August.

For further information about the NBFF, contact Pat Faison at 973.596.6635 or pfaison@newarkmuseum.org. Complete festival schedule may be found at <http://www.newarkmuseum.org/NBFF.html>.

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ABOUT THE NEWARK MUSEUM

The Newark Museum is located at 49 Washington Street in the heart of the Downtown/Arts District of Newark, New Jersey, between the Rutgers Newark Campus and NJPAC. The Newark Museum is 10 miles west of New York City and easily accessible by NJ Transit and PATH. The Museum is open all year round: Wednesdays through Sundays, from Noon – 5:00 p.m. Suggested Museum admission: Adults, \$12.00; Children, Seniors and Students with valid I.D., \$7.00. Newark Residents and Members are admitted free. The Museum Café is open for lunches Wednesday through Sunday. Convenient parking is available for a fee. The Newark Museum campus, including its collections, facilities, and other resources, is accessible to accommodate the broadest audience possible, including individuals utilizing wheelchairs, with physical impairments, other disabilities, or special needs. For general information, call 973.596.6550 or visit our web site, <http://www.NewarkMuseum.org>.

Newark Museum, a not-for-profit museum of art, science and education, receives operating support from the City of Newark, the State of New Jersey, the New Jersey Council on the Arts/Department of State — a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, the New Jersey Cultural Trust, the Prudential Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Victoria Foundation, the Wallace Foundation and other corporations, foundations and individuals.

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