EMORY'S BLACK FILM SERIES TAKES A LOOK AT LYNCHING IN AMERICA

Emory University’s fourth annual Black Film Thursdays series will examine painful passages in American history under the title “Eyewitness: Lynching and Racial Violence in America.” The March 28 – May 16 series is being coordinated to complement the upcoming Atlanta exhibition of “Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America,” appearing at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site May 1 – Dec. 31.

The series of weekly screenings will feature 11 distinctive and powerful films. The films chosen for the series center on lynching—the subject of “Without Sanctuary”—and draw attention to issues of justice, race and violence, human rights violations and their documentation in America.

Emory is partnering with the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, the Auburn Avenue Research Library and the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum to present screenings of the films. The series is intended to foster dialogue within and across communities, and each film will be followed by a facilitated discussion.

For the past three years, Emory has sponsored the annual African-American film series and presented a variety of cinema genres and themes focused upon race and black experiences in the United States. The series also has brought several award-winning African-American filmmakers to Atlanta to share their work and vision.

All of the screenings are free and open to the public. For more information, call 404-712-8768 or email WITNESS@listerv.cc.emory.edu.

Thursday, March 28
• “Between The World And Me” (1995, 5 min., Ian Moore, director)
This experimental film by independent filmmaker Ian Moore brings to life Richard Wright’s 1935 poem of the same name. The poem tells the haunting story of a young man’s discovery of the bones of a lynching victim. As he contemplates the grisly scene, his fear and imagination transport him into the hands of the lynch mob.
• “A Lynching in Marion” (1995, 30 min., Nolan Lehman, director)
• “Third Man Alive” (1997, 45 min., America’s Black Holocaust Museum)
In August 1930, a 16-year-old African American named James Cameron survived a lynching. These two documentary films, made some 65 years later, allow Cameron to recount his story in vivid detail. He watched as an angry crowd, made up of thousands of whites, murdered two of his friends. The assembled mass then turned on Cameron. The films are told from distinct and specific perspectives, and together tell a complex story of Cameron’s harrowing experience, and his life thereafter.
7 p.m., Auburn Avenue Research Library, 101 Auburn Ave. NE, Atlanta
Facilitator: Natasha Barnes, English professor, Emory
Guest speaker: Winfred Rembert, artist and lynching survivor

Black Film Thursdays “Eyewitness”/2

Thursday, April 4
• “Rosewood” (1997, 140 min., John Singleton, director)
The film is based on the historically-repressed events that took place in the small, thriving black town of Rosewood, Fla. Fueled by economic competition and jealousy, and finally ignited by an adulterous white woman’s charge of abuse against a black man, a legally-sanctioned lynch mob from the nearby white town of Sumner descended on Rosewood and burned it to the ground.
6 p.m., 208 White Hall, 480 Kilgo St., Emory
Guest speakers: Sherrie Dupree and Janie Bradley-Black, historians at the Rosewood Descendants’ Heritage Foundation

Thursday, April 11
• “Between the World and Me” (1995, 5 min., Ian Moore, director). Experimental film by independent filmmaker Ian Moore brings to life Richard Wright’s 1935 poem of the same name.
• “4 Little Girls” (1997, 102 min., Spike Lee, director)
This 1997 Oscar-nominated documentary examines the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., that killed four black girls and helped to galvanize and accelerate the civil rights movement.
7 p.m., Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, 450 Auburn Ave., Atlanta
Facilitator: Karen Murphy, program associate, Facing History and Ourselves
Thursday, April 18
• “Within Our Gates” (1919, 79 min., Oscar Micheaux, director)
An historic and seminal work, Oscar Micheaux’s 1919 film is the earliest surviving feature directed by an African-American filmmaker. It provides contemporary viewers with a sense of the filmmaker’s passionate social criticism. “Within Our Gates” is a key example of Micheaux’s spirited and unconventional filmmaking in style and content and was his answer to the racist propaganda that filled another film of the era, D.W. Griffith’s “The Birth of a Nation.” “Within Our Gates” was unseen for 75 years, until the Library of Congress restored and re-released it in 1993.
7 p.m., 208 White Hall, 480 Kilgo St., Emory
Facilitator: Miriam Petty, Ph.D. candidate and “Eyewitness” film series producer, Emory

Thursday, April 25
• “Between the World and Me” (1995, 5 min., Ian Moore, director). Experimental film by independent filmmaker Ian Moore brings to life Richard Wright’s 1935 poem of the same name.
• “They Won’t Forget” (1937, 90 min., Melvyn Leroy, director)
One of a few feature films made about lynching, this 1937 courtroom drama has been called one of the best of the Warner Brothers studio’s “social protest” films. Based on Ward Greene’s 1936 novel “Death in the Deep South,” “They Won’t Forget” is drawn from the facts of the 1915 Atlanta lynching of Leo Frank. Film print provided by Turner Classic Movies.
7 p.m., William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, 1440 Spring St., Atlanta
Facilitator: Matthew Bernstein, film studies professor, Emory

Black Film Thursdays “Eyewitness”/3

Wednesday, May 1 (opening day of “Without Sanctuary,” Day of Remembrance)
• “Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice” (1989, 58 min., William Greaves, director)
This award-winning film by William Greaves documents the dramatic life and turbulent times of the pioneering African-American journalist, activist, suffragist and pre-eminent anti-lynching crusader of the post-Reconstruction period. Though nearly forgotten today, Ida B. Wells was a household name in black America during much of her lifetime (1862-1931) and was the peer of such well-known African-American leaders as Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois.
2 p.m., Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, 450 Auburn Ave., Atlanta
Facilitator: Clarissa Myrick-Harris, Africana studies professor at Morris Brown College, founding director of the Southern Black Community Oral History Center

• “Strange Fruit” (2002, 57 min., Joel Katz, producer/director, copyright Oniera Films LLC)
This new documentary by filmmaker Joel Katz follows the history of “Strange Fruit,” a song written by Jewish schoolteacher Abel Meeropol, and made famous by jazz legend Billie Holiday. In telling the story of this song, the filmmaker addresses the history of lynching, the early civil rights movement, and the relationship between Jewish songwriters and performers and black music. Katz uses “Strange Fruit” as a theme to explore the lives of lynching victims, as well as the life and politics of the songwriter.
4 p.m., Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, 450 Auburn Ave., Atlanta
Discussion with director Joel Katz, “Without Sanctuary” exhibit curator Joseph Jordan, and others.

Thursday, May 9
• “The Murder of Fred Hampton” (1971, 88 min., Michael Gray, director)
In 1968 the Film Group, an independent Chicago production company, began filming a documentary about the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party and its chairman, Fred Hampton. A fiery orator, Hampton was only 20 years old at the time, but his electrifying words and actions were inspiring young black people to demand respect and to insist that their power and voice be felt in politics. On Dec. 4, 1969, in a pre-dawn, FBI-directed Chicago police raid, four Panthers were shot, leaving Fred Hampton and another Black Panther dead. The film’s inclusion in the series should prompt viewers to examine the definition of lynching, as it moves from the accepted idea of a spontaneous event orchestrated “by persons unknown.” The film presents the notion of lynching as an act perpetrated by the powerful in order to intimidate those who criticize them.
7 p.m., Auburn Avenue Research Library
Facilitator: Akinyele Umoja, African American Studies professor, Georgia State University

Thursday, May 16
7 p.m., Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, 450 Auburn Ave., Atlanta
• Film TBA
The final film in the Eyewitness Series will be presented in collaboration with the IMAGE Film and Video Center’s DREAM (Developing Racial Equality through Arts and Music) Series. For 15 years, IMAGE Film & Video Center has worked to build and support a strong independent media arts community in Atlanta and the Southeast, promoting the production, exhibition and public awareness of film and video as artistic forms of individual expression through programs like the DREAM Series.

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