



## Southampton African American Film Festival Is October 2–5, Raise Your Voice

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"Life's Essentials" with Ruby Dee is a celebration of the acclaimed actress who died this past June.  
September 28, 2014 by Joan Baum

The theme of the 9th annual Southampton African American Film Festival, "Raise Your Voice," is a challenge to the East End community to speak out about race and injustice.

The clarion call of the festival goes beyond protesting the killing of unarmed black men, such as in the recent shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., which is only the latest in a long line of racially charged incidents involving blacks and law enforcement. As festival organizer and Executive Director of the Southampton African American Museum Brenda Simmons suggests, each word of the injunction "Raise Your Voice" is important. She wants this four-day festival of film, jazz and the spoken word to "raise" discussion in the sense of educating all members of all communities about what is happening in our still racially divided country.

Simmons notes that the election of President Barack Obama has not meant the end of racism. The festival seeks not only to prompt critical awareness of issues that reflect or feed racism, by way of showing and discussing relevant films, documentaries and classics, but to promote the larger mission of bringing communities together, especially younger folk, by fostering appreciation of the culture and artistry of people of color. Ultimately, the festival is a celebration of filmmakers, actors, personalities, musicians and performers who have joyous as well as painful stories to tell. Simmons is particularly delighted that she has the support of the Southampton Youth Bureau whose staff members provide programs in "positive youth development and early intervention services," and she is thrilled by the "terrific" participation of East Hampton High School faculty and personnel who will be bringing students to the festival.

The select group of films was chosen by the festival organizers, led by Simmons and new board member, the Oscar winning (*Close Harmony*) film director Nigel Noble, a resident of East Hampton. A member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, Noble sees about 150 films a year and is particularly passionate about documentaries and about bringing younger audiences to appreciate them. His own festival offering, *Porgy and Bess: An American Voice* (1997), which he directed, exemplifies the expertise and significance of documentaries for both black and white audiences. A racial history of Gershwin's controversial opera *Porgy and*

*Bess*, the film details various performances over the years and explores the impact they had on casts and audiences, black and white.

The festival opens with a documentary, the Sundance and Cannes Film Festival award-winning *Fruitvale Station*, about the "trigger quick actions" of the San Francisco police. Later it will be showing *Life's Essentials* with Ruby Dee, a celebration of the acclaimed actress who died this past June. There is also Muta'Ali Muhammad's fascinating look by way of interviews and archival footage at the religious and physical *Trials of Muhammad Ali*. Look, too, for the documentary on the life of a black waiter in a whites-only restaurant (*Booker's Place*) and Anne Makepeace's *We Still Live Here—As Nutayuneân*, about a Massachusetts Native American tribe. Of course, the younger set should not miss Luke Meyer's *Unlocking the Truth* which chronicles the "meteoric rise" of a young teen heavy metal Brooklyn band, or the Spoken Word and Jazz evening which will feature performances by Grammy award-winning poet and hip-hop artist J. Ivy (et al.) and Jazz Stylings by Charles Certain.

All festival screenings take place at the Southampton Arts Center at 25 Jobs Lane, Southampton. *Fruitvale Station* will be shown, free, on October 2, 6–9 p.m. All other films will be shown on October 4–5. An Evening of Spoken Word and Jazz will be held on October 3, 7 p.m.–9 p.m. at the Southampton Cultural Center, 25 Pond Lane, Southampton. For info, schedule and tickets visit [southamptonafricanamericanmuseum.org](http://southamptonafricanamericanmuseum.org).

