

## Docs, Drama, Music at B.F.F.

*A project of the African American Museum of the East End in Southampton*

By Mark Segal | November 5, 2013 - 12:31pm

This year's Black Film Festival opens tonight at 6:30 with a screening of "The Central Park Five," a 119-minute documentary by Ken Burns, David McMahon, and Sarah Burns about the five young black and Latino men convicted of raping a jogger in Central Park in 1989 and exonerated 13 years later.

The free program, which will take place at the Southampton Cultural Center on Pond Lane, will be followed by a panel discussion featuring one of the wrongly convicted men, Yusef Salaam; Dr. Anael Alston, an award-winning educator; the Rev. Kirk Lyons Sr., founder of Brothers Keepers; Kyle Braunskill, director of Safe Harbor Mentoring, a program that operates in prisons, and Audrey Gaines, a licensed clinical social worker.

In keeping with the festival's traditional format, tomorrow from 7 to 9 p.m. the cultural center will provide a venue for spoken-word and jazz performances, this year featuring Charles Certain of Certain Moves, who brings jazz, rock, funk, and R&B, Sheree Elder, who is a jazz singer, and guest poets. The \$20 admission fee helps fund the festival.

Saturday the program moves to Stony Brook Southampton, where an episode from season one of "Roots" will be screened at 3:15 p.m. A question-and-answer session with John Erman, the director of the episode, and Tina Andrews, an actress who played Kunta Kinte's girlfriend, will follow.

On Sunday the festival concludes at the Southampton Center, in the old Parrish Art Museum building on Job's Lane, with the world premiere of Nigel Nobel's "Prison Terminal: The Last Days of Private Jack Hall," a 40-minute documentary shortlisted for the 2014 Oscar for best short documentary, and a showing of "Voices of Sarafina!" The Saturday and Sunday events are also free.

A project of the African American Museum of the East End in Southampton, the festival is organized by Brenda Simmons, co-founder of the museum, together with Cheryl Buck and the film committee. Over lunch, Ms. Simmons talked about the challenges of getting one of the Central Park five to join the panel discussion.

"I contacted [Dr. Natalie Byfield](#), a writer whose forthcoming book, 'Savage Portrayals: Race, Media, and the Central Park Jogger Story,' will be published by Temple University Press. She put me in touch with Sarah Burns."

Ms. Simmons and Ms. Burns played telephone tag throughout the summer, until they finally connected and Ms. Burns referred Ms. Simmons to the Innocence Project, a national litigation and public policy organization dedicated to exonerating wrongly convicted prisoners. Two months ago, Yusef Salaam, who was 16 at the time of his arrest and now works for a New York City hospital managing the wireless system that doctors and staff there use to communicate, agreed to attend the screening and join the panel.

The Saturday program will include "Beat the Drum" (2003), a prize-winning South African film about a young orphan who must confront the realities of urban life; "Beasts of the Southern Wild" (2012), the acclaimed story of the effect of a flood on a bayou community and a young girl, played by Quvenzhané Wallis, who was nominated for an Oscar; "Tug O War" (2013), a short film, and "Roots," season 1, part 2 (1977), from the Emmy Award-winning mini-series.



Quvenzhané Wallis received an Oscar nomination for best actress for her portrayal of Hushpuppy, seen here navigating her flooded bayou community in a makeshift raft in "Beasts of the Southern Wild."

The day will conclude with “I Am Slave,” a 2010 film based on the real-life experiences of a 12-year-old girl abducted and sold into slavery in the Sudan. According to Ms. Simmons, “We chose this film before the release of ‘12 Years a Slave,’ with which its story has so much in common.”

Sunday’s premiere, “Prison Terminal: The Last Days of Private Jack Hall,” is a cinema verite documentary shot in one of the country’s oldest maximum-security prisons. It tells the story of the final months in the life of a terminally ill prisoner who was tended by hospice volunteers, themselves prisoners.

The festival’s concluding film, “Voices of Sarafina!” is a documentary based on the 1987 Lincoln Center musical “Sarafina!” with members of the original young South African cast. The musical retold the story of the Soweto uprising in South Africa in 1976.

***About the Author***

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**Mark Segal**

*Arts Assistant/Reporter*

631-324-0002

e-mail: [mark@ehstar.com](mailto:mark@ehstar.com)