



The quarterly Newsletter by Women Filmmakers of Zimbabwe is produced by  
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## International Images Film Festival for Women



Women Alive is the theme for this year's International Images Film Festival for Women (IIFF). IIFF begins on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November and runs through to the 1<sup>st</sup> of December in Harare before moving to Binga from December 3 to 6. With only seven weeks to go, over 60 films are scheduled to screen at the Ster Kinekor, Alliance Francaise and the Book Café.

In a country of rising maternal mortality and women, including young and married women being at great risk for HIV, while hardly a day goes by without a media report of a woman being killed by her partner and registered doctors being accused of raping patients who may never recover from the trauma, it is time to take women's lives

seriously! This is what IIFF does, by providing inspirational and empowering stories about women who have overcome their odds for viewers to enjoy for over a week. Even more importantly, IIFF provides a space where women can come together to network, bond and build their dreams in a relaxed, safe environment. Women rarely have this opportunity outside the festival week.

This eleventh edition of the festival will showcase documentaries, feature and short films all showing how women manage to stay alive themselves, and keep others alive in the home, the workplace and the world. Watch out for Education of Auma Obama (Germany/Kenya), Linda Linda Linda (Japan), Fraulein (Switzerland), Queen To Play (France), Lark Farm (Italy), Fiance for Yasmina (Spain), Madame Dakar (Netherlands) and End Of The Road (Iran) and Cultures of Resistance (USA).

New categories at IIFF 2012 include the New Man and the Shasha/ Ingcitschi/ Zim Experts (SIZE). Highlights in the SIZE category include I Will Marry Myself by Melgin Tafirenyika and Stephen Visser. This

is a fascinating story about an African woman, who was fed up of being taken for granted by men that she took the matter into her own hands. Find out how by coming to IIFF. Other films to look forward to include The In-Laws and Maidei Meets Europe by fellow Zimbabweans Demetria Karongah and Rufaro Kaseko based in the United Kingdom. The In-Laws is a summer comedy trip cleverly highlighting the clash of beliefs when Africa meets Europe in an attempt to bridge the gap. Maidei Meets Europe is a short film about an innocent and cultured but clueless rural African girl who comes to Europe unannounced and she is entangled in a typical European makeover.

IIFF is the only women's film festival in sub-Saharan Africa. Each year, IIFF provides a unique focus theme that showcases the best and most interesting films from around the world. This memorable event engages, interrogates and inspires positive images of women and women's narratives through film screenings.

## **THE EDUCATION OF AUMA OBAMA**

Documentary, DVD, 2011, 80 min



### **AUMA OBAMA**

A brave film for this year's IIFF comes from Welsh-Nigerian-German filmmaker Branwen Okpako.

The documentary portrays the life and education of Auma Obama, a Kenyan academic, artist and half-sister to sitting American President Barack Obama. Ms Obama's story is a moving example of the remarkable patriotism, wisdom, courage and sacrifice displayed by a generation of post-independence born Kenyan intellectuals, who were educated in the West and enjoyed the option to remain in

the global north, but committed to return to impact on the development of their country.

Through the eyes of Ms Obama herself, the film reflects on conflicts and events in colonial Kenya to begin with, then in the newly independent state, that imparted to Kenya's young leaders the focus and drive they needed to overcome the disorientation that often accompanies rapid change. The film's aptly depicts the impact of a life between cultures when one must leave one's own continent and country for further education, placing one in an "in-between" position.

Okpako raises the question of how Kenya's young people like Ms Obama successfully negotiated their roles as temporary immigrants and preserved their sense of belonging to their own cultures and peoples. Ms Obama's sometimes lonely confrontation with these challenges resembles a steeplechase through several European and African countries. She has won the race in inimitable Kenyan fashion.

The Documentary presents the viewer with a kaleidoscope of voices and images

describing Ms Obama's experiences, her choices in life and the current situation she finds herself in as half-sister of the most powerful man in the west. Although not everybody turns out to have a brother who becomes the US President, IIFF audiences will probably appreciate and understand this film more than in most places around the world. Many women young and young at heart here at home are experiencing the dilemmas Ms Obama faced and are also negotiating their way forward. Our brave sister and Ms Okpako are true African WOMEN ALIVE. We celebrate them at this year's IIFF whose theme they embody perfectly.

**Ms Obama is expected to open  
IFF 2012 and to be present with  
director Ms Okpako at the  
screening of THE EDUCATION OF  
AUMA OBAMA on 24th November  
at the Book Café.**

## TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY?



People in all parts of the world watch films as a type of entertainment, a way to have fun. Fun for some people can mean laughing, while for others it can mean crying, or feeling afraid. Some films are not solely for entertainment but rather are social commentary artworks meant to advocate or bring to light certain issues. Film festivals are a good platform for some of these films. Film festivals provide access to some films that audiences would not normally easily see. Film fetivas also enable the viewers to participate in the global culture of celebrating films in a festive setting.

The International Images Film festival for Women (IIFF) the flagship project of Women Filmmakers of Zimbabwe, has been enjoyed by audiences in Harare and other urban and peri-urban centres for over a decad. In the beginning IIFF

charged a small fee for entrance. After a few years, the entrance fee was discontinued due to the administrative problems brought about by hyperinflation. Now Zimbabwe has settled into the United States Dollar use, the issue is to pay or not to pay.

The strange thing witnessed in Zimbabwe is that when film festivals come with an entrance fee the audience requests free entrance. Yet when the festival does not charge an entrance fee, audiences look down on the festival. What is going on here? Do Zimbabweans know what we want? Or do Zimbabweans only want things they cannot have? That is they can have a free festival, they do not want it, but if they cannot afford an entrance fee then they want it?

Another thing that deserves mention is the kind of thing Zimbabweans will pay for, is that Zimbabweans tend to patronize music events, and/or foreign acts. More serious art forms that can bring about real benefits to the viewer and society tend to be shunned. This also applies to corporates engaged in social responsibility in their choices of who and what to sponsor. A consequence of this is that few new ideas come into our society and we keep on discussing the same old thing and seeing things the same old way without any rejuvenation. It is true, as a

nation we all need de-stressing so we all we need light entertainment, but are we doing ourselves a favour as individuals and a nation? Where is our ability to transform and adapt going to come from?

Another new direction worth talking about is the way choices to pay or not to pay are made depending on whether the organiser is male or female. New research being carried out by Professor Chant at the London School of Economics suggests that women are being so under-resourced that they end up taking on more of the burden of social responsibility without getting equal benefits for their greater share of input. This can go on to such an extent that women end up working for everybody, including those who donate to such women and their organisations.

It is worth bearing all the above in mind when we make decisions about what to engage in, support, consume or pay for. IIFF is the only international film festival held in Zimbabwe this year. The question remains to pay or not to pay.

**This article has been written  
by IIFF friend and curator  
Hans-Christian Mahnke for The  
Namibians but is very relevant to us  
Zimbabweans as well. Manhke was  
also the IIFF 2011 Jury Chairperson.**

AfricAvenir herewith would like to suggest something, which might be of interest to officials in the cultural arena of Namibia and the continent. The Chinese have the Confucius Institute, the Germans have the Goethe Institute, the French the Institut Francise, the British the British Council, the Portuguese the Instituto Camoes, and so forth. All these institutes have a legitimate aim: To promote their cultures and promote cultural exchange.

Why do we not have a similiar promotional tool for African cultures and memories around the world? Considering budgetary aspects, it might not make sense to have African states representing themselves individually, but maybe the AU should establish cultural centres around the world, or let's say, for a start, in major cities around the world like Addis Abeba, Cairo, Nairobi, Dakar, Buenos Aires, Havanna, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, New York, Washington, Berlin, London, Johannesburg, Abuja, and so forth. Maybe

even with an emphasis on former colonial metropolises and centres of African diaspora like in the Caribbean.

The aim would be in line with the thinkings and theories of Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral. These centres would serve the need for an eye-to-eye cultural exchange between continents, countries and its peoples, and hence would contribute to a more tolerant, non-racist and peaceful world. These centres would promote and teach African culture and they also would contribute towards the restoration of African memory, history, and cultural emancipation on a global scale, and of course, contribute to the strengthening of and constantly contribute to the revitalization of pan-African ties.

We from AfricAvenir believe this would be the pre-condition of any economic upliftment and independence of Africa as a continent and as a people and would trigger intra-African trade relations too. And hence, we believe, this would be of interest to honest African businessmen and - women, who believe in a true African Renaissance and who would be willing to make their contribution towards this aim by funding such institutes. A cultural emancipation of Africa, leading to better

economic conditions for Africans, would serve the core interests of the African business communities.

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