



**CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL** Oct. 12 - 26, 2017
Presented by Cinema/Chicago

**53
NEWS**

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**ALFRE WOODARD TO BE HONORED AT
53RD CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

Renowned Performer to Receive a Career Achievement Award at 21st Black Perspectives Tribute;
Full Black Perspectives Program Also Announced

CHICAGO -- The **53rd Chicago International Film Festival**, presented by Cinema/Chicago, announced today that acclaimed actress **Alfre Woodard** will be honored with a **Career Achievement Award** as part of the **21st edition of the Festival's Black Perspectives Program**, which is generously supported by AARP Illinois. The award will be presented on **Saturday, October 21** at a special event during the Festival to be held at the AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois St.) in Chicago. The "**Tribute to Alfre Woodard**" will feature an onstage discussion with the actress, showcasing clips highlighting her decades-spanning career.

From her Oscar-nominated breakout performance in 1983's *Cross Creek* to her stunning turn as Mistress Shaw in *12 Years a Slave*, Woodard has endowed each of her characters with a complexity and strength that have continued to resonate with audiences. Over the decades, she has created stirring and sympathetic characters in roles both large and small, from her revelatory lead as the strong-willed Chantelle in John Sayles' *Passion Fish*, to the fierce and protective mother anchoring Spike Lee's *Crooklyn*, to her Golden Globe-winning performance as devoted nurse Eunice Evers in the HBO film *Miss Evers' Boys*.

"Alfre Woodard has shown her enormous talents across a range of media, imbuing each role she plays with a level of dignity and depth," said **Artistic Director Mimi Plauché**. "Because of her impressively expansive body of work, which only continues to grow, and because of her powerful and fearless performances, we are honored to present her with this Award."

The Black Perspectives Program was founded in 1997 in collaboration with Spike Lee to showcase excellence in African American filmmaking. Since the Festival began its annual Black Perspectives Tribute, Cinema/Chicago has consistently honored actors and filmmakers of the highest caliber, including

Sidney Poitier, Halle Berry, Ruby Dee, Forest Whitaker, Morgan Freeman, Viola Davis, and Steve McQueen, among others. By arranging select screenings and panel discussions, the Festival creates a unique environment in which audiences can gain valuable insights into the challenges and triumphs of African American filmmakers and actors.

This year's Black Perspectives Program will present 13 compelling programs, including feature films, documentaries, short films, a film industry panel and a master class with Oscar-nominated director Sam Pollard. Among this year's exciting lineup: the Sundance hit and award-season contender *Mudbound*; the French comedy *Chateau*; two documentaries about celebrated black artists, Sammy Davis, Jr. and Lorraine Hansberry; the world premiere of Kartemquin Films' founder and Chicago filmmaker Gordon Quinn's '63 *Boycott*, to be shown on the October 22nd anniversary of the famous Chicago public school march; and other highly anticipated and acclaimed films.

"Across the nation and in Illinois, AARP is excited to recognize and showcase outstanding films that have a unique appeal to diverse audiences with a grownup state of mind," said AARP Illinois State Director Bob Gallo. "On behalf of our 1.7 million Illinois members, we are excited to work and partner with the 53rd Chicago International Film Festival to bring quality, engaging films to Chicagoans of all ages."



About Alfre Woodard

Alfre Woodard's work as an actor has earned her an Oscar nomination, four Emmy Awards and seventeen Emmy nominations, three SAG Awards and a Golden Globe. Woodard's illustrious body of work includes her Oscar-nominated performance in *Cross Creek*, *12 Years a Slave*, *Captain America: Civil War*, *Annabelle*, *Mississippi Grind*, HBO's *Mandela*, *Grand Canyon*, *Passion Fish*, her multi-award winning role in *Miss Evers' Boys*, *Crooklyn*, *Love and Basketball*, *American Violet*, *The Family that Preys*, *Something New*, *Down in the Delta*, *Desperate Housewives*, HBO's *True Blood*, NBC's *State of Affairs*, and Netflix's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Currently, Woodard plays villain Mariah Dillard in the Marvel television series, *Luke Cage*, and will appear next in *So B. It*, opening in theaters this October. She stars in Netflix's *Juanita* coming in 2018, and will provide the voice of Sarabi in Disney's *The Lion King* set to be released in 2019. In addition to her acting career, Woodard is a longtime activist. She is a founder of Artists for a New South Africa, an organization dedicated to ending apartheid and advancing democracy and equality. In 2009, Woodard was appointed by Barack Obama to the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, where she was an active advocate for the arts in education. She continues her work with the John F Kennedy Center's "Turnaround Arts" initiative, launched under Michelle Obama, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education and the White House Domestic Policy Council to narrow the achievement gap and increase student engagement through the arts. Woodard champions programs such as National Student Poets, Film Forward, the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award and Turnaround Arts, where she continues to inspire high-poverty, under-performing public schools throughout the country. She directed and produced *Nelson Mandela's Favorite African Folktales*, which won the 2010 Audiobook of the Year, and garnered a 2010 Grammy Award nomination for "Best Children's Spoken Word Album."

Other films and events included in the Festival's 2017 Black Perspectives Program include:

Black Cop -- Dir. Cory Bowles, Canada

It's not easy being a black cop: Your community doesn't trust you and your colleagues are wary of you. But for one officer, the tension between duty and moral obligation eventually pushes him over the edge,

and he sets out, vigilante-style, to exact a twisted kind of vengeance on the white and privileged in his city. Timely and biting funny, *Black Cop* is an unapologetic, confrontational satire about racial tension today. *91 min.*

Can't Turn Back: Edith + Eddie and '63 Boycott

From Chicago-based Kartemquin Films (*Hoop Dreams*) comes two new powerful half-hour documentaries about interracial harmony, conflict, and societal injustice. In Laura Checkoway's award-winning *Edith and Eddie*, America's oldest interracial newlyweds, ages 96 and 95, find their happy union threatened by a family feud. *'63 Boycott*, by Gordon Quinn (*Golub*), chronicles the Chicago Public School Boycott of Oct. 22, 1963 when more than 200,000 Chicagoans, mostly students, marched to protest segregationist policies. *60 min. With 30-minute post-screening discussion.*

Chateau (La Vie de Château) -- Dirs. Modi Barry and Cédric Ido, France

In the Château d'Eau district, a bustling African neighborhood in the heart of Paris, the always natty, fast-talking Charles (Jacky Ido) works the streets trying to lure clients into local hair salons. At odds with other hustlers, Charles sees the rise in competition as a sign that he needs to leave, but can he realize his own entrepreneurial dreams? This smart, fast-paced comedy brings wit and heart to the immigrant tale of trying to stay ahead of the game and out of the way of the law. *French with subtitles. 81 min.*

Félicité -- Dir. Alain Gomis, France/Belgium/Senegal

Single mother and chanteuse Félicité ekes out a living performing in a rough Kinshasa bar. Her fiercely guarded independence is threatened after her son is involved in a life-altering accident, and she must find a way to pay for his care. A love letter to persistence and the power of song, *Félicité* is buoyed by one woman's irrepressible spirit in the face of overwhelming odds. *Lingala, French with subtitles. 123 min.*

For Ahkeem -- Dirs. Jeremy S. Levine and Landon Van Soest, U.S.

Daje Shelton, a 17-year-old girl from St. Louis, just wants to do the right thing. But growing up in a tough neighborhood, she can't catch a break: she's struggling in school; she's distracted by boys; and she's surrounded by a culture of violence and brutality. The fatal shooting of Michael Brown Jr. provides a powerful backdrop for this masterfully crafted portrait of working-class urban life. *90 min.*

Mudbound -- Dir. Dee Rees, U.S.

This powerful epic set in the 1940s follows the entangled lives of two families—one white, one black—on a single farm in rural Mississippi. Based on the bestselling novel, the film focuses on the unlikely friendship forged between each of the family's oldest sons—both WWII veterans—and its catastrophic consequences. Featuring committed performances from Carey Mulligan, Garrett Hedlund, Mary J. Blige, and Jason Mitchell, *Mudbound* is a monumental and resonant tale about race in America. *134 min.*

The Rape of Recy Taylor -- Dir. Nancy Buirski, U.S.

From the director of the highly acclaimed *The Loving Story* comes another dramatic tale of racial conflict. In 1944, six young white men raped 24-year-old mother Recy Taylor in Alabama. Rather than stay silent, Taylor spoke up against her attackers. With the help of the NAACP and its chief investigator Rosa Parks, Taylor waged a battle for justice that is powerfully brought to life through archival footage, early "race films," and heartbreaking personal interviews. *91 min.*

Sammy Davis, Jr.: I've Gotta Be Me -- Dir. Sam Pollard, U.S.

Singer, dancer, and actor; "Rat Pack" legend; civil rights activist; Jewish convert; and Nixon supporter—the life of Sammy Davis, Jr. defies expectations and easy categorization. Charting the

performer's surprising journey across the major flashpoints of contemporary American history, Oscar-nominated filmmaker Sam Pollard interviews such luminaries as Billy Crystal, Jerry Lewis, and Whoopi Goldberg and culls together an array of electric performances for this captivating exploration of the man, his talents and the struggle for identity. *100 min.*

Sighted Eyes/Feeling Heart -- Dir. Tracy Heather Strain, U.S.

The title of her posthumous autobiography *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* only partly sums up the trailblazing life of Southside Chicago playwright Lorraine Hansberry. Although best known for her landmark 1959 play *A Raisin in the Sun*, Hansberry forged an expansive path as an African-American female artist and activist—while also wrestling with self-doubt and questions about her sexual identity. *118 min.*

The Work -- Dirs. Jairus McLeary and Gethin Aldous, U.S.

Imposing men break down in tears; convicts embrace each other in emotional catharsis. Such is “the work” that takes place within the walls of Folsom State Prison’s Inside Circle, an intense four-day group therapy program where offenders interact with troubled individuals from the outside hoping to exorcise their own demons. This eye-opening, award-winning documentary chronicles the surprising moments of healing and camaraderie that can occur when confronting the darkest moments of one’s past. *87 min.*

Shorts 7 – Another Country: Black Perspectives

A family grapples with the consequences of close-quarters racism in ***New Neighbors*** (U.S.). ***Fastest Man in the State*** (U.S.) examines the deep-seated racial divides embedded in the history of the University of Virginia. A bathroom attendant working the ***Night Shift*** (U.S.) in a Los Angeles nightclub attempts to get his life back on track. ***Waiting for Hassana*** (Nigeria) is a haunting recollection of a violent Boko Haram attack. A police ***Sketch*** (U.S) artist assumes he has solved a crime when he thinks he encounters a suspect from one of his renderings. ***Skull & Bone*** (U.S.) chronicles the costume-clad efforts of a New Orleans group to curb the threat of gun violence. ***Macho*** (U.S.) explores ideas of manhood and masculinity as a community reels from the recent murder of a transgender woman.

Industry Days Panel – The Moonlight Effect: The Expanding of Black Cinema – Or Not?

Friday, October 20, 4 – 5 p.m.; \$5/ticket, open to the public

After black cinema triumphs *Moonlight* and *Get Out*, is the film industry expanding its definition of what African-American cinema is and can be? Join this provocative discussion about whether the industry is changing. Or are these films the exception and not the new rule?

The 53rd Chicago International Film Festival is October 12-26. Screenings take place at the AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois St.). Tickets are on sale and are available by calling **312-332-FILM (3456)**, [online](#), at the **Festival Box Office at AMC River East** (322 E. Illinois St.), and at the **Festival Pop-Up Box Office** (400 S. Dearborn).

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About AARP

AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and

personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the world's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

About Cinema/Chicago

Cinema/Chicago, the presenting organization of the Chicago International Film Festival, is a year round non-profit arts and education organization dedicated to fostering better communication between people of diverse cultures through the art form of the moving image. In addition to the Chicago International Film Festival, Cinema/Chicago's programs include: International Screenings Program, Chicago International Television Festival, CineYouth Festival, and year-round Education Program. Celebrating its 53rd edition October 12-26, 2017, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival.

Festival Sponsors and Partners

The 53rd Chicago International Film Festival's sponsors include Official Airline: American Airlines; Premiere Sponsors: AARP, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Wintrust Community Banks; Participating Sponsors: Chicago Line Cruises, TV5Monde, Wansas Tequila; Education Sponsors: Allstate Insurance Company, HBO; Event Partners: AMC Theaters, Sound Investment AV; Hotel Partners: Ambassador Chicago, Conrad Chicago, The Whitehall Hotel; Platinum Media Partners: National CineMedia (NCM); Gold Media Partners: WTTW11, WBBM, WXRT; Silver Media Partners: WBEZ, Firewatch Films; Special support provided by Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the National Endowment of the Arts, the Illinois Arts Council Agency, Illinois Film Office, Chicago Film Office, and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE).